C ON T E N T S.

A CRITICAL STUDY

OF

THE LIFE AND NOVELS

OF

B A N K I M C A N D R A.

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T R A N S L I T E R A T I O N.

The system of transliteration followed is that adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society. The inherent vowel (a) has, however, been omitted in places where it is silent in Bengali. In cases where a baphalā simply doubles the consonant to which it is attached it has been represented by v. Otherwise no distinction has been made in transliteration between the bargīya ba and the antahstha ba, as both are usually pronounced in Bengali as b. There are, however, many well-known Indian names (e.g., Vidyāsāgar, Vāsavadattā, Ratnāvalī etc.) which have been transliterated as Sanskrit words with v instead of b.

A B B R E V I A T I O N.

B.Y. denotes the Bengali year of publication of periodicals and journals in Bengali.

C H A P T E R I

BENGALI NOVELISTS BEFORE BAŃKIMCANDRA.

BAṄKIMCANDRA CAṬṬOPĀDHYĀY (CHATTERJEE) is generally regarded as the creator of the Bengali Novel, but it would be doing an injustice to some of the earlier writers if the entire credit of this achievement were to be given to him. Therefore, before dealing with Bankimcandra himself, it may be worth while to enquire what works of fiction he found already in existence. There were, of course, stories in Bengali long before there was anything that could be strictly called a novel. In the main the aim of these earlier stories was didactic and moralistic. Sanskrit literature furnished examples of prose fiction and no doubt Bengali writers knew of the existence of romances like Kādambarī, Daśakumāracarita, Vāsavadattā, popular tales like Kathāsaritasāgara, Bṛhatkathā and moral tales of the type of the Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa.

In Bengal there was a class of people known as "Kathaks", whose vocation it was to tell stories, chiefly of a religious nature, based on the Purāṇas and other mythological books. There were also tales for children which have been handed down from generation to generation and are still told to young people in Bengal, often by their grand-parents, elderly relatives, nurses and attendants. (1)

(1) Cf. Ṭhākurdādār Jhuli, Ṭhākurmār Jhuli, etc.

In all these stories little care was paid to characterisation and plot-construction, and there was very little attempt on the part of the story-tellers to find any solution to the eternal problems confronting human life, nor was there any serious treatment of the conflicts of passions and sentiments that agitate the human mind. Their world was far removed from the actualities of everyday life, an enchanted fairy land of pure marvels where a wandering prince brought back to life a sleeping beauty with the gentle touch of his magic wand, or a demon-haunted kingdom, where the heart of a bee hidden in a tiny jewel case secreted below a tank held the lives of thousands of raksasas. There were in some of these tales occasional glimpses of the social conditions of the people, but they were imaginative stories, and not studies from real life. Some of them had a romantic background, but were far too full of fancy and imagination and they entirely lacked that realism which plays such a prominent part in modern fiction.

Prominent among the writers of the first quarter of the 19th century in Bengal was Bhabānīcaraṇ Bandyopādhyāy (1787-1848), who edited Samācār Candrikā, a Bengali weekly periodical of considerable influence in its own day. Bhabānīcaraṇ also edited for some time Sambād Kaumudī and was secretary of the Dharma Sabhā, which was

the mouthpiece of the orthodox Hindus in Calcutta. Under the nom-de-plume of Pramathanāth Śarmā he wrote a satirical work, NABABĀBUBILĀS (1823), which contains a vivid picture of social life in Bengal in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.(1) The book was immensely popular in its day, but perhaps its importance has been over-valued.(2) It was, no doubt, important as the first attempt at a sketch of social life, but it is spoilt by a peculiar style and by its mixture of Bengali and non-Bengali words. As a realistic account of society, however, it is interesting. The subject matter of the book as clearly stated in the preface is the luxury practised by the sons of those, who amassed wealth by foul means. Even several years after its publication it appears to have been still popular.(3)

(1) Śanibārer Ciṭhi, Caitra, 1238. B.Y., p. 79. Nabababubilas has been described by James Long as the career and vagaries of a modern Babu - Catalogue of the Vernacular Literature Committee's Library, p. 5. That the educated Bengali gentleman was not in those days what he should have been is clearly evident from contemporary accounts of him - Calcutta Journal, September 10th, 1822, September 19th, 1822; Asiatic Journal, 1822, p. 285; Calcutta Review, 1850, p.160.

(2) D. C. Sen - Bengali Prose Style, pp. 21-22.

(3) Samāchār Candrikā, 27th January, 1831, p. 576.

A far more important work was ĀLĀLER GHARER DULĀL (1858).[1] Its author Pyārīcāād Mitra (1814 - 1883), who wrote under the pen-name of Ṭekcāād Ṭhākur was a gifted person. He was a social reformer of the Derozio school and was associated with various societies and public institutions in Calcutta. Amidst his multifarious activities he found time to contribute to various periodicals in English and Bengali published in Calcutta and also to spiritualist journals in England and America. The credit of being the first Bengali novelist is generally accorded to him. H.A.D. Phillips regarded Ālālex Gharex Dulāl as "a truly indigenous novel." [2]

That Pyārīcāād regarded his work as a novel is clear from his introduction in English to this book, "The above original Novel in Bengali being the first work of the kind, is now submitted to the public with considerable diffidence. It chiefly treats of the pernicious effects of allowing children to be improperly brought up, with remarks on the existing system of education, on self-formation and religious culture, and is illustrative of the condition of Hindu society, manners, customs, etc. and partly of the

(1) Translated into English by C. D. Oswell, 1893; by N.N. Mitra and M. S. Knight, Journal of the National Indian Association, 1882-83.

(2) Preface to "Kapalkundala."

state of things in the Moffussil." (1)

This raises the question of the introduction of the word "Novel" into Bengali. In Sanskrit there are the terms "Kathā" and "Ākhyāyikā". The former according to an authoritative writer on Sanskrit Poetics would be equivalent to the word "Novel". (2) But it has been remarked, "The least part of the Sanskrit romance is the thread of the story or adventures of its characters; all the stress is laid on rhetorical embellishment, minute description of nature, and detailed characterisation of exploits and of mental, moral and physical qualities." (3) The nearest approach in Bengali to the word "Novel" would be "upanyas", but strictly speaking for a long time no distinction was made in Bengali between the words "upanyās" and "galpa". (4) In Bibidhārtha Saṁgraha the story of a man and a gandharba is called Saralar Upanyās and the story of a shoe-maker who became an astrologer is styled

(1) It is rather peculiar that he should have prefixed an introduction in English to this work. There is also a Bengali introduction. Yadugopāl Cattopādhyāy wrote a preface in English to a Bengali story - Hatabhāgya Murād. There is an introduction in English to Bṛhatkathā, Pt. 1, by Ānandacandra Vedāntabāgīs.

(2) J. Nobel - Foundations of Indian poetry, p. 175.

(3) ^Vāsavadattā, Tr. L. H. Gray, P. 34; ^Vienna Oriental Journal, 1904, Literary Studies on the Sanskrit Novel.

(4) Tārāsaṅkar Tarkaratna refers to the word "galpa" in the preface to Kādambarī and Kaliprasanna Ghosāl refers to it in the preface to Mālatīmādhab. Cf. Rājāt o Saralatār puruskār nāmak galpa.

Padukākār Gānākar Upanyās. (1) Harinath Majumdār refers to the word "Novel" in BIJAY BASANTA (1859), but he meant by it an allegorical tale (rūpak itihās). (2) Pandit Lālmohan Vidyānidhi defined "upanyās" as a "mātakātmak ākhyāyikā." (3) But the word "upanyās" had been familiar in Bengali for some time past. In reviewing stories and tales Bibidhārtha Sangraha was applying the term "upanyās" to them. (4) Gopīmohan Ghos, author of a tale, BIJAYBALLABH (1863), distinctly wrote in the preface that his work was written after the manner of those stories known in the English language as "nabal". (5)

The term "Novel" denotes in English "a study of manners, founded on an observation of contemporary or recent life, in which the characters, the incidents and the

(1) Śaka 1773, Phālgun; Śaka 1775, Kārtik.
Besides the words "galpa" and "upanyās" there were other terms e.g., "Upākhyān", "ākhyāikā" to signify to a tale or a story. The use of the word "upākhyān" is found in works like Nalopākhyān, Manohar Upākhyān, Malinikānta, Basupālitopākhyān, Bāsantikā, Bijayballabh, Jayābatir Upākhyān, Pranayprabāha etc. Harinath Sarmā's Mudrārākṣas and Rāmgati Nyāyaratna's Ramābatī are described as "ākhyāyikā".

(2) Cf. Nītibodhak Itihās (1849); Sulalit Itihās (1853), in the sense of a story. "Itihās" in the sense of a story is used by Gurudās Majumdār in Romio oban Julieter Manohar Upākhyān (1848).

(3) Kābyanirnay, pp. 14.-15.

(4) 1856, part 51, p. 72. The use of the term "upanyās" in the general sense of a story is found in works like Nilmani Basak's Arabya Upanyās, Tārakchandra Ghatāmani's Mālabikāgnimitra which was published in 1859 in Bibidhārtha Sangraha, Kedārnath Datta's Banoukcarit and Rāmkāli Bhattācārya's Adbhut Upanyās.

(5) Rājnārāyan Basu regarded Gopīmohan as the first Bengali novelist - Bāngālā Bhāsā o Sāhitya, p. 58.

intrigue are imaginary, and, therefore, "new" to the reader, but are founded on lines running parallel with those of actual history." (1) Sir Walter Scott defined a novel as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society." (2) Both Nababābubilās and Ālāler Gharer Dulāl confirm to these definitions. But the criticism that Pyārīcānd plagiarised the earlier novel is without any basis. (3) Such pictures of contemporary life were becoming popular with Bengali writers and Pramathanāth Śarmā was not the only one in the field. The Bibidhārtha Saṃgraha was quite correct when it said that although the model of Ālāler Gharer Dulāl was Nababābubilās, Pyārīcānd's tone is more dignified and his satire more brilliant. (4)

Bankimcandra remarked that Pyārīcānd first showed Bengali writers that they need not go to Sanskrit or any other literature for materials and he declared that Ālāler Gharer Dulāl was the beginning of Bengali prose literature based on materials to be found in Bengali homes. (5) Bankimcandra had occasion to write once more, "The language

(1) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Vol. XIX, p.855.
(2) Essays in Chivalry, Romance and the Drama, p. 65.
(3) D. C. Sen - Bengali Prose Style, p. 24.
(4) Saka 1780, Parbu V, Caitra, Pt. 60.
(5) Tekcāder Granthāvali, p. IV.

of Ālāl is easy and its contents are full of sound instruction. If novels are written in this way people would read them and the new literature of Bengal would become popular." (1) The Bibidhārtha Samgraha wrote, "Calcutta has no lack of Matilals. Perhaps readers will be able to find one or two Matilals in their own locality." (2)

Pyārīcād's aim was to create a better moral atmosphere in Bengali society. The characters are real and lifelike. The men and woman depicted are representative inhabitants of the metropolis and the villages. The village landlord Bakreswar, his thoroughly worthless son Matilal, the evil-minded Thak cāca, Mr. Butler the lawyer, Baradā Babu the ideal gentleman, fill up the canvas of this work. There are glimpses of the administration of justice in Calcutta, the Police Court, the High Court Sessions and the Grand Jury, the Court of the Magistrate in a district town, early morning scenes in the city, the oppression of Indigo-planters, the insanitary conditions of Calcutta and schools for English education.

Ālāler Gharer Dulāl depicts a time when learning commanded little respect, when religion was at its

(1) Sāhitya, Vol. XXIV, p. 103; Collected Works of Bankimcandra, Vol. I. p. 668.

(2) Saka 1779, Parba V, p. 46.

lowest ebb and when wealth counted for much in social prestige. It was not biting satire that Ṭekcād used for exposing the evils of his days. He introduced a deep moral vein in his story and was absolutely faithful to reality. His humour is never coarse like that of many other writers of the same period. Drinking, licentiousness, polygamy and every kind of moral and social vice he attacked with forcefulness, yet in a style of simplicity and naturalness. If he was hard on the leisured rich, he compensated for his harshness by the pathos with which he described the life of the poor. It is not simply the baithakkhana of the Bengalis of those days that Ṭekcād depicts. He describes with sympathy the inner apartments of the Bengali household. In his story nothing is unreal, or absurd, or obviously out of place. Even the poetasters of the age were not spared. Ṭekcād made fun of them in pieces of poetry, introduced now and then in the course of the story. The book is a landmark in Bengali literature as a description of Bengali life, the real life of the people in their homes, not only the more beautiful side of it, but even its squalid aspects.

Pyārīcād's Ālāler Gharer Dulāl is further noteworthy from the point of view of style. The Sanskritists had for a long time held sway in the domain of Bengali prose.

They wrote in a style far too difficult for ordinary people to understand. Pyārīcād gave a lead in the direction of simple prose as it is used in everyday life. The pedantic language which was too long held in reverence by the high priests of literature was completely disregarded by him and he proved that the language of everyday life could be used for serious writing also. (1) It has been pointed out that the style adopted by Pyārīcād is not original and had already been used. (2) Still, he remains as the first well-known Bengali writer, who successfully yoked a simple style to the treatment of a serious subject.

Poverty of subject matter has been noticed as one of the characteristics of Bengali literature between 1700 and 1850. Much of the literary possibilities which could be borrowed from Sanskrit had already been used up. Tekcād made a departure from the customary subjects which had appealed so long to Bengali writers. He made use of the Bengali sense of humour and gift of description which go to

(1) Pyārīcād was followed soon after by another able writer, Kaliprasanna Simha (1840-70), who in Hutom Pyecār Naksā (1862), used the colloquial style throughout. The title of this work is given as Hutom Pecār Naksā by S. K. Chatterji - The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Pt. 1 , p. 135.

(2) D. C. Sen - Bengali Prose Style, pp. 17 - 18.

make good fiction. (1) But he stopped after beginning the pioneer work. He had interests in other directions and could not concentrate himself on one sphere of activity. It was left for a greater genius, Bankimcandra, to provide a vaster range and wider variety of subject matter for the novel and as life grew more complex in Bengal under the influence of a foreign culture, Bengali fiction assumed a richer and fuller form.

(1) E. J. Thompson, Indian Art & Letters, 1927, p. 14.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

The following is a list of some other works of fiction in Bengali before Bankimcandra's novels:-

Rāselās	-	Mahārājā Kālīkṛṣṇa, 1833.
Vāsavadattā	-	Madanmohan Tarkālaṁkār, 1837.
Nītibodhak Itihās	-	Kṛṣṇamohan Bandyopādhāy, 1849.
Ārabya Upanyās	-	Nīlmani Basāk, 1850.
Kāfridāser Bṛttanta,		Translated from the English of L. Richmond 1851.
Phulmaṇi o Karuṇār Bibaraṇ	-	Mrs. Mullens, 1852.
Sulalit Itihās	-	Rāmgati Mitra, 1853.
Nababibibilās	-	Bholānāth Bandyopādhyāy, 1853.
Kādambarī	-	Tārāsankar Tarkaratna, 1853.
Nalopākhyān	-	Haranānda Bhaṭṭācārya, 1855.
Priyambad	-	Kedārnath Datta, 1855.
Manohar Upākhyān	-	Harimohan Karmakār, 1855.
Daśakumārcarit	-	Girisćandra Vidyāratna, 1856.
Ajendumatīcarit	-	Dīnabandhu Gupta, 1856.
Gopālkāminī	-	Rāmnārāyaṇ Vidyāratna, 1856.
Susīlmantrī	-	Dvārkānāth Rāy, 1856.
Cārucarit	-	Aghornāth Tattvanidhi, 1857.
Durākāṁkṣer Bṛthā Bhramaṇ	-	Kṛṣṇakamal Bhaṭṭācārya, 1857.(1)
Ratnāvalī	-	Tārakcandra Cūṛāmani, 1857.
Cittabinod	-	Rameścandra Mukhopādhyay, 1857.
Rāselās	-	Tārāsankar Tarkaratna, 1857.

(1) This work was published anonymously. Hārāncandra Rakṣit attributed it to Kṛṣṇakamal's brother Rāmkamal - Baṅgasāhityo Baṁkim, p. 54. Kṛṣṇakamal in subsequent years admitted the authorship - Purātan Prasaṅga, Bipinbihārī Gupta, p. 200.

Aitihāsik Upanyās – Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy, 1854.

Bṛhatkathā - Ānandacandra Vedāntabāgīs, pt. 1, 1857; pt.11, 1858.

Basupāli topākhyān - Kedārnāth Bandyopādhyāy, 1858.

Mālatīmādhab - Kalīprasanna Ghoṣāl, 1858.

Polimokas - Rājkṛṣṇa Bandyopādhyāy, 1858.

Candramukhir Upākhyān, 1859.

Bijay Basanta - Harināth Majumdār, 1859.

Nalinīkānta - Kedārnath Datta, 1859.

Hemprabhā - Dvārakānāth Gupta, 1859.

Vikromorvasī - Rāmsaday Bhaṭṭācārya, 1859.

Mālatīmādhab - Lohārām Śiroratna, 1860.

Bāsantikā - Jagadīś Tarkālaṁkār, 1860.

Harināth Śarmā- Mudrārākṣas, 1860.

Nīlambarī - Yogendranāth Caṭṭopādhyāy, 1860.

Nīlanjan - Kedārnāth Caṭṭopādhyāy, 1860.

Ratnāvalī - Yadunāth Tarkaratna, 1860.

Vāsavadattā - Jaygopāl Gosvāmī, 1861.

Abdhūt Upanyās- Rāmkālī Bhaṭṭācārya, 1861.

Hatabhāgya Murād - Yadugopāl Caṭṭopādhyāy, 1861.

Bañcakcarit - Kedārnath Datta, 1861.

Puranjan - Abināścandra Caṭṭopādhyāy, 1861.

Romābatī - Rāmgati Nyāyaratna, 1862.

Aitihāsik Upanyās - Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy, 1862.

Vicitravīrya - Kṛṣṇakamal Bhaṭṭācārya, 1862.

Vikramorvaśī - Dvārakānāth Gupta, 1862.

Bijayballabh - Gopīmohan Ghoṣ, 1863.

Jayābatīr upākhyān - Harimohan Mukhopādhyāy, 1863.

Tamkhuṛo - Tārinīcaraṇ Cakravartī, 1863.

Pārijāthikās - Jaynārāyaṇ Bandyopādhyāy, 1863.

Praṇayprabāha - Maheśchandra Kārfarmā, 1864.

Elijābeth - Rāmnārāyaṇ Vidyāratna, 1864.

C H A P T E R II

BAŃKIMCANDRA - THE MAN

The paucity of materials for a biographical sketch of Bańkimcandra makes it impossible to attempt anything beyond a very brief account of his career. The only biography of Bańkimcandra, written by his nephew, Śacīścandra Caṭṭopādhyāy, was published in 1911. (1) Unfortunately the work is not free from errors and the real matter in it is of a meagre nature in spite of its having gone through three editions. Bańkimcandra left no record of his views of men and things and his published letters are few. (2) It is strange that no contemporary of his has written a life of this remarkable man. He did not live in complete isolation it is true, but what was there in him that made others so little enthusiastic about writing his biography? That remains an enigma still. In 1900 a monograph was published by his sister's son Kailāścandra Mukhopādhyāy, who was Bańkimcandra's junior by five years and a contemporary at Hooghly College. Kailāścandra recorded a few sayings and opinions of Bańkimcandra and some facts about his life. Śacīścandra seems to have used certain

(1) Bańkim Jībanī.

(2) Bengal : Past & Present, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, 1914 (April-June); Sāhitya, Agrahāyan, 1325, B.Y; Prabāsī, Kārtik, 1336, B.Y.

materials from this pamphlet, though, strangely enough he makes no acknowledgment of it whatsoever and never even mentions it.

The year 1838 is a famous year in the annals of Bengal. Keśabcandra Sen, the theistic reformer, Kṛṣṇadās Pāl, the publicist, Hemcandra Bandyopādyhāy, the poet and Baṅkimcandra were all born in that year. Baṅkimcandra was born at Kāṭālpāṛā, near Naihati, in the district of Twenty-four Parganas on the 27th June, 1838. His father Yādabcandra was a Kulīn Brāhman and a man of means and position. Baṅkimcandra had two elder brothers, Śyāmācaran and Sañjībcandra and a younger brother, Pūrṇacandra. Baṅkimcandra's first schooling was at Midnapore, where his father was then a Deputy Collector.

He was not fond of games like many other boys. In 1847 he joined the Hooghly College and it was said of him that excepting Dvārakānāth Mitra, who became a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, no student of that college possessed such genius.(1) There have been several other distinguished students of the same institution - Dīnabandhu Mitra, Akṣaycandra Sarkār, Dvijendralāl Rāy, Rt. Hon. Syed Amir Ali, but Baṅkimcandra remains the greatest of them

(1) Baṅkim Jībanī, p. 30.

all. As a boy he was by nature of studious habits and the range of his studies was wide. It is recorded of him that when he appeared for the first Senior Scholarship examination he was not inferior to the best students in the upper classes in general acquirements and information.(1)

In 1849 he was married to a young girl. The Bengal of his younger days was different from what it is now. Child-marriage was not discouraged, and a girl of five became his wife. In 1857 Bankimcandra entered the Presidency College. Kesabcandra Sen was one of his contemporaries at this institution. There are two remarkable stories of his courage as a young man. On one occasion he sharply reprimanded an English military officer at Chinsurah for teasing a half crazy boy and on another he rebuked a high English official who had entered the female apartments of his house evidently through mistake.(2) When the Sepoy Mutiny broke out he was in Calcutta and he said to Mr. W.A. Montriou, one of his teachers in Law, "If for a single day I thought that your rule would come to an end, I would have

(1) A Few Sayings and Opinions of Bankim Chandra by Kailas Chandra Mukherjee, p. 14.

(2) Ibid - pp. 3-4, 8-9.

thrown the law books into the waters of the Ganges and returned home." (1)

The University of Calcutta was founded in 1857. Bankimcandra was one of the few students to sit for the examination for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1858. Of the candidates who had sat for the examination all failed, but the Board of Examiners recommended that two candidates - Bankimcandra and Yadunāth Basu who had passed creditably in five of the six subjects and had failed by not more than seven marks in the sixth might be allowed to have their degrees as a special act of grace being placed in the second division. The University authorities accepted the recommendation of the Board and Bankimcandra became one of the first two graduates of the University of Calcutta.(2) He read for this examination among other things Shakespeare's Macbeth, Dryden's Cymon and Ephigenia, and Addison's Essays.(3) At the annual meeting of the University held on the 11th December, 1858, he was presented by the Principal of the

(1) Bankim Jībanī, pp. 105-6.

(2) Minutes of the Calcutta University, 1858, pp. 18-19.

(3) Minutes of the Calcutta University, 1857.

Presidency College and admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. (1) He had in the meantime been appointed to the Bengal Executive Service as a Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector and had taken up his official duties at Jessore in August, 1858.

It was at Jessore that he first met Dīnabandhu Mitra with whom he became very friendly. During his stay there his wife died. In 1859 he was transferred to Nagoya, a subdivision in the Midnapore district and there he came across a Tāntrik priest (Kāpālik) who suggested the Kāpālik of Kapālkuṇḍalā.(2) He was married again in the same year. He then went to Khulna where his name came into prominence in connection with the suppression of the river dacoits and the measures he adopted in dealing with some unruly Indigo-planters.(3) His next official station was Baruipur to which place he was transferred in 1864. At Baruipur he seems to have been very popular.(4) During his stay there his first two novels Durgeśnandinī and KapālKuṇḍalā, were published. In 1867 his merit as an officer was recognised

(1) Minutes of the Calcutta University, 1858, p.121.
(2) Bankim Jībanī, p. 113.
(3) C. E. Buckland - Bengal under the Lt. Governors, Vol. II, p. 1077.
(4) Sambād Prabhākar, 9th November, 1865.

by his appointment as Secretary to the Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal for the revision of the pay of Ministerial officers. ~~His third novel Mrnalini was published when he was at Alipur.~~

In 1869 Bankimcandra went to Berhampore and while at this place he projected the idea of starting a Bengali journal. At Berhampore he was connected with a literary association of which Rev. Lālbihārī De and Dr. Rāmdās Sen were active members. In 1872 Bankimcandra's plan of founding a Bengali journal matured in Bangadarśan. At Berhampore the most remarkable event of his life was his clash in 1873 with Col. Duffin, the officer commanding of the troops there, against whom he brought a lawsuit which created considerable excitement.(1) When he left the place in 1874 the inhabitants gave him a grand farewell. Next year while on leave at Kāṭālpāṛā he began to write Rādhārāṇī, which has at its basis the actual story of a girl, who was lost in a crowd during the car-festival.(2) He lost his father in 1881 and in the same year he was appointed

(1) Hindu Patriot, 19th January, 1874.

(2) Bankim Jībanī, P.442.

Assistant Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Finance Department. This post was abolished in 1882 and Bankimcandra reverted to his former work as Deputy Magistrate.

Shortly afterwards he went to Orissa and one of his experiences on the way was his encounter with a gang of dacoits. He must have remembered the incident while writing Debīcaudhurāṇī. He went to Orissa for a second time in 1886 and there are glimpses in Sītārām of his memory going back to what he saw there. The most remarkable and noteworthy event of the latter part of his life was his controversy on Hinduism with Dr. Hastie, a Scottish missionary. This was started in 1882 by Dr. Hastie by a scathing attack on Hinduism in the columns of the Statesman. To Dr. Hastie's aspersions on Hinduism Bankimcandra replied under the pen-name of Ram Chandra. He made a masterly defence of Hinduism and cornered the learned Doctor of Divinity, exposing the fallacy of his arguments. He retired from the Service in 1891 at the age of fifty-three after thirty-three years of service. The same year the Government conferred upon him the title of Rai Bahadur as a mark of personal distinction. But public opinion was evidently not placated by what it considered to be an inadequate

inadequate recognition of his eminence.(1)

After he retired he did not allow his varied interests to flag. He was a Fellow of the University of Calcutta and was one of those who advocated the introduction of Bengali as a subject for examinations in that University.(2) This proposal, however, did not become a reality till after Bankimcandra's death. In October, 1893, he presided over a meeting of the Literary Section of the Society for the Higher Training of Young Men when Śivanāth Śāstrī delivered an address in Bengali on national literature and national character.(3) He was for sometime President of the Literary Section of this Society. His name appears as a member of the English Language and Literature and the Bengali Language and Literature Sub-Committees of the Central Text-Book Committee in 1894. A few months before his death the Government made him a Companion of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire. A distinguished Bengali writer once remarked, "If our rulers had any appreciation of Bengali literature, Vidyasagar, Bankim and Michael would have received the Peerage

(1) Bankim Jībanī, p. 225.

(2) Nabyabhārat, Bhādra, 1331, B.Y. p.232; Prabāsī, Āsvin, 1339, B.Y. p.885.

(3) Calcutta University Magazine, January, 1894, p.13.

and Rabindranath would have been Knighted." (1)

Bańkimcandra died on the 8th April, 1894, after rendering such services to Bengali literature that he well deserves the title of one of the makers of Bengali thought and culture. One of his well-known contemporaries regarded him as the "Sun of Bengali literature of this century." (2) His death was a national calamity and the whole province felt the void created by it. The Press in Bengal was unanimous in its chorus of appreciation of his genius. One of the most influential periodicals of the day wrote, "Those who help in the formation of a language in its early stages, and by their labours enrich it, and invigorate it, are among the truest benefactors of their race. Bankim Chunder Chatterjee will occupy this place of honour in the annals of his country ..... A prince and a great man has fallen." (3) Another newspaper wrote, "By the death of Rai Bunkim Chunder Chatterjee, Bahadoor, C.I.E., Bengali literature has suffered an irreparable loss.

(1) D. L. Rāy - Bhāratbarṣa, Vol. I, Pt. I, p.5. The Knighthood came shortly after, but D. L. Rāy did not live to see the honour being bestowed upon Rabīndranāth.

(2) N. C. Sen - Āmār Jīban, Vol. IV, p.280.

(3) The Bengalee, 14th April, 1894.

For not only did his works exercise a healthy influence on the literary tastes of his countrymen, but what is better, they instilled a high moral tone into the educated classes of the native community .....

"Rightly apprehending that a taste for reading would be best developed by attractive works of a light character he applied the energies of a fertile mind to the production, in the first place, of those novels which have made his name a household word among the Bengali community."(1)

Meetings were held all over Bengal for the purpose of expressing sorrow at his death. Speaking at one of the meetings held in Calcutta in memory of Bankimcandra, Surendranath Banerjea (~~afterwards Sir and Minister to the Government of Bengal~~) said, "So long as the Bengali language is spoken, so long as it is the language of our mothers, our wives, our daughters and sisters, so long as it continues to be the vehicle of the sweetest and tenderest affections and of the noblest and most generous impulses, so long as it is used as an instrument for purposes of edification, of instruction and amusement, so long will the name of Bunkim Chunder Chatterjee be remembered, honoured and respected."(2)

(1) The Statesman, 16th April, 1894.

(2) The Bengalee, 12th May, 1894.

Personally Bankimcandra was a man of very striking appearance. When Candranath Basu met him at one of the College Reunions he felt that something like lightning had entered the place. (1) Rabindranath was very much struck with Bankimcandra's personality. His was "a figure which at once" seemed to Rabindranath "as distinguished beyond that of all others" and being that of a man, "who could not have possibly been lost in any crowd." Rabindranath writes, "The features of that tall fair personage shone with such a striking radiance that I could not contain my curiosity about him - he was the only one there whose name I felt concerned to know that day. When I learnt he was Bankim Babu I marvelled all the more, it seemed to me such a wonderful coincidence that his appearance should be as distinguished as his writings. His sharp aquiline nose, his compressed lips and his keen glance all betokened immense power. With his arms folded across his breast he seemed to walk as one apart, towering above the ordinary throng - this is what struck me most about him. Not only that he looked an intellectual giant, but he had

(1) Bankim Jibani, pp. 230-31.

on his forehead the mark of a true prince among men."(1)

(1) Rabindranath Tagore - My Reminiscences, pp. 247-8.

CHAPTER III

BANKIMCHANDRA: THE WRITER.

Bańkimcandra served his early literary apprenticeship in the Bengali periodical, SAMBĀD PRABHĀKAR, edited by Iśvarcandra Gupta, who was favourably impressed by Bańkimcandra's writings. (1) Haraprasād Śāstrī, who as a young man knew Bańkimcandra wrote, "Isvara Gupta was so much charmed with his poetical and prose compositions that he often paid him a visit at Kantalpara. In after life Bankim Chandra used to relate to his friends the story of these visits with pride." (2) That Bańkimcandra cherished for Iśvarcandra Gupta a profound respect is seen from the preface he contributed to ~~a volume of~~ Isvarcandra's poems published in 1885-86. The Sambād Prabhākar encouraged young authors to write and a literary competition was one of its special features in 1853. Bańkimcandra, Dīnabandhu Mitra and Dvārakānāth Adhikārī participated in the competition and all three received prizes. (3)

(1) Sambād Prabhākar, 25th February, 26th March, 28th May 28th June, 1852; 5th February, 17th February, 30th March, 17th September, 1853; also 10th March, 23rd April, 10th July, 1852 and 10th January, 18th March and 27th April, 1853. About some of these contributions Iśvar Gupta made favourable remarks.

(2) Calcutta University Magazine, May, 1894, p.72.

(3) Sambād Prabhākar, 17th June, 1853.

His first collected work LALITĀ O MĀNAS was published in 1856. Iśvarcandra Gupta reviewed it in appreciative terms. (1) These poems were published again in 1878 and Bańkimcandra wrote in the preface, "I do not cherish the hope of taking to myself any credit by showing in what manner I used to write in my youth, because most people at that age can write poetry of this type. That which is readable, whether it is written by a boy or by an old man is equally to be discredited." He did not write much poetry in his more mature days except a few occasional pieces for Bańgadarśan. These were published as GADYA PADYA BĀ KABITĀ PUSTAK. The Calcutta Review said of it, "The poetry he has given us in the book under review deserves very high praise." (2) But Bańkimcandra's career as a poet was practically finished with his youthful experiments in the Sambād Prabhākar.

What led him to write novels in Bengali he never made clear in any of his writings. Haraprasād Śāstrī says, "At College Bankim Chandra was a voracious reader of

(1) Sambād Prabhākar - 28th July, 1856.

(2) 1878, Notice of Vernacular Books.

history, and he always longed to be a distinguished historian." (1) History might have attracted him to novel-writing. He considered the novel to be a good vehicle for his ideas. In one of his works he wrote, "Much of what I have to say has to be woven into the novel taking into consideration the time, place and theme." (2) In 1865 his first novel DURGESNANDINĪ was published, KAPĀLKUNDALĀ came in 1866, and MṚNĀLINĪ followed in 1869. He is said to have remarked that at this time his favourite occupation was reading the works of Shakespeare. (3) The success of his first novel was immediate. Leading periodicals like Sambād Prabhākar and Rahasya Sandrabha favourably reviewed it. (4) The Sambād Prabhākar published an address of appreciation presented to Bankimcandra by admiring readers of this novel. (5) That

(1) Bankim Jībanī, P.394.

(2) Sītārām. These words were omitted in later editions.

(3) Bankim Jībanī, P.259, 3rd Edition.

(4) Sambād Prabhākar, 14th April, 1865; Rahasya Sandarbha, Pt. XXI, pp. 140-44.

(5) 11th September, 1865.

it was becoming a favourite with Bengali women is evident from some letters published in the same periodical. (1)

In 1872 Bankimcandra began to publish BANGADARSAN, a periodical which soon became the ablest and most influential monthly magazine in Bengali in those days. The reason why he launched such a publication was fully explained in his introductory article in the first issue of Bangadarsan. In a letter to one of his friends written about the same time Bankimcandra said, "I have myself projected a Bengali Magazine with the object of making it the medium of communication and sympathy between the educated and the uneducated classes. You rightly say that the English for good or for evil has become our vernacular; and this tends daily to widen the gulf between the higher and lower ranks of Bengali society. This I think is not exactly what it ought to be; I think that we ought to disanglicise ourselves so as to speak to the masses in the language which they understand." (2) Yet he himself had once begun to write stories in English. "The Adventures of a Young Hindu" was his first effort in that line. But after completing

(1) 2nd November, 1865.
(2) Bengali: Past and Present, April-June, 1914, Pp. 273-74.

another story, "Rajmohun's Wife," he turned his mind to Bengali literature. Instead of being a second or third-rate Bengali writer of English he became the greatest Bengali novelist.

The apathy that the educated community showed to the Bengali language and literature in those days had been for some time alarming the thoughtful section of the public. The Tattvabodhinī Patrikā wrote, "Without the cultivation of the language of a country there can be no spread of knowledge nor any advancement of education." (1) The Sambād Prabhākar had deplored the indifference shown towards the study of Bengali. (2) Another periodical appealed to the people of Bengal to study Bengali. (3) One journal wrote that without the patronage of the people themselves no language could prosper. (4)

In an atmosphere of indifference and callousness, Bankimcandra took the initiative in turning the attention of the educated Bengali public to the advancement

(1) Series II, Pt. II, p. 179.

(2) 5th April, 12th April, 1848.

(3) Pūrnimā, Vol. I, 1858, p. 5.

(4) Bangabidyāprakāśikā, 1855-56, p.130.

of Bengali literature. From stories of gods and goddesses, from tales of mythology and legends of the past, from fantastical stories about ghosts and goblins, from the not too wholesome erotic songs and lyrics, he awakened the minds of men and women to the needs of the time, to concentrate their efforts on building an edifice of literature, dealing with the best and noblest thoughts of the race, its highest aspirations and emotions, and its loftiest ideals.

What effect, Bangadarsan made upon the contemporary Bengali public can well be understood from what Rabindranath Tagore writes about it in his autobiography, "Then came Bankim's Bangadarsan, taking the Bengali heart by storm. It was bad enough to have to wait till the next monthly number was out, but to be kept waiting further till my elders had done with it was simply intolerable! Now he who will may swallow at a mouthful the whole of Chandrashekhar or Bishabriksha, but the process of longing and anticipating, month after month; of spreading over the long intervals the concentrated joy of each short reading, revolving every instalment over and over in the mind while watching and waiting for the next; the combination of satisfaction with unsatisfied craving, of burning curiosity with its appeasement;

these long-drawn out delights of going through the original serial none will ever taste again." (1) Sir Praphullacandra Rāy writing about his younger days says, "We were then ten or twelve years old. The taste for literary appreciation was not born in us. Still, we were eager for Bańgadarśan. Dube, Chaube, Tewari with their bamboo-sticks, Lalchand Sing who danced playfully and was a voracious eater but quite worthless in his duties - these were very pleasing." (2) In Rabīndranāth's opinion Bankimcandra "invited both East and West to a veritable festival of union in the pages of his Bangadarshan." (3)

To Bańgadarśan, Bankimcandra attracted a number of literary men. In its pages were published many of his own novels in succession - BISABṚKṢA, INDIRĀ, YUGALĀNGURĪYA, CANDRAŚEKHAR, RAJANĪ. Besides these he contributed articles on various topics -

(1) My Reminiscences, p. 115.

(2) Bhāratbarṣa, Vol. XV, Pt. II, p. 69.

(3) Modern Review, June, 1921, p. 696.

literary criticism, satire, fine arts, ethics, religion, antiquities, sociology, history, philology, anthropology, politics, education, science, philosophy etc., After four years Bańgadarśan ceased publication. In wishing goodbye to the readers Bańkimcandra wrote, "Four years ago Bańgadarśan began to be published. I had certain definite aims in view when I first started it. In the prefatory remarks I explained some of them; some were left unsaid. Much of what was said and unsaid has been fulfilled. Now there is no further need for the existence of Bańgadarśan." (1) Reviewing the last issue of Bańgadarśan the Calcutta Review deplored its impending discontinuance.(2) Nabīncandra Sen has suggested that Bańkimcandra stopped the publication of Bańgadarśan because he made too many enemies by his strong criticism of literary upstarts.(3) Buckland thought that the pressure of official duties led Bańkimcandra to discontimue the publication of his journal. (4) This seems to be the more probable explanation.

After two years his brother Sañjībcandra revived Bańgadarśan and under his editorship it lived for some years. It was warmly welcomed and thought of as an

(1) Collected Works, Vol. III, p. 282 f.
(2) 1876, P. XXVIII.
(3) Āmār Jīban, Vol. II. P. 318.
(4) Bengal Under the Lt. Governors, Vol. II, P. 1078.

"excellent Bengali periodical." (1) In the second series of Bangadarśan, KṚṢṆAKĀNTER UIL, ĀNANDAMAṬH, RĀJSIṂHA, and part of DEBĪ CAUDHURĀṆĪ, were published serially. Bankimcandra contributed to two other periodicals. Pracār and Nabajīban, which were popular in their day. During the latter part of his life he became interested in religious matters and wrote several works on Hinduism - KṚṢṆACARITRA, DHARMATATTVA and some essays on the Gītā. But to think that his "later works were undertaken expressly in the interests of Hindu revival - a movement which received its strength and vitality from his adherence" would not be correct. (2) He had some sympathy for the Hindu revivalists but he did not adhere absolutely to their tenets and ideas. He was far too original-minded for that. Śaśadhar Tarkacūṛamaṇi's discourses on Hinduism drew the attention of many people to religion but Bankimcandra was not at all influenced by Śaśadhar. Rabīndranāth testifies, "No shadow of Sashadhar was cast on his exposition of Hinduism as it found expression in the Prachar - that was impossible." (3)

(1) Calcutta Review, 1877, P. V.

(2) Calcutta University Magazine, May, 1894.

(3) My Reminiscences, P. 251.

Apart from his Bengali writings he wrote some valuable articles in English. His contribution on Vedic literature appeared in the March and April issues of the Calcutta University Magazine in 1894. The "Confessions of Young Bengal" and the "Study of Hindu Philosophy" appeared in December, 1872, and May, 1873, respectively in Mookerjee's Magazine. His articles on "Buddhism and Samkhya Philosophy" and "Bengali Literature" were published in 1871 in the Calcutta Review. In 1869 he read before the Bengal Social Science Association a paper, "On the Origin of Hindu Festivals," which was published in the Transactions of the Association.(1) In 1870 he read before the same Association another paper, "A Popular Literature for Bengal", which was also published in the Association's Transactions. (2) Some of these articles and papers have been translated into Bengali. (3) He lived for fifty-six years only and wrote most of his works amidst official duties, which certainly were of an exacting nature. An active career full of hard work was perhaps responsible for his premature death.

(1) Vol. III

(2) Vol. IV.

(3) Sāhitya, Kārtik, 1319 B.Y, Agrahāyan, 1323, Jaistha, 1320, Māgh-Phālgun, 1323, and Baisākh-Jaistha, 1324.

Born in a family where literary taste was present in abundance, Bankimcandra was also fortunate in drawing round him a host of friends who actively co-operated with him in his literary enterprises. The first contributors to Bangadarsan were Dinabandhu Mitra, Hemcandra Bandyopadhyay, Jagadisnath Ray, Tarāprasad Cattopādhyay, Krsnakamal Bhattacarya, Ramdas Sen and Aksayacandra Sarkar. The Bankim circle also included men of letters like Candranath Basu, Rajkrsna Mukhopādhyay, Krsnabihari Sen, Nilkantha Majumdar, Damodar Mukhopādhyay, Indranath Bandyopādhyay, Kaliprasanna Ghos, Gobindacandra Das etc. His brothers Sanjibcandra and Purnacandra were able writers. Sanjibcandra's novels Madhabilata and Kanthamala are well-known. Purnacandra wrote a novel Svapnasahacari.

It is easily understood from the dedication of his works with what friendliness Bankimcandra regarded his literary brethren. They belonged to an intellectual fraternity. Durgesnandini was dedicated to his brother Syamacaran, Mrnalini to Dinabandhu Mitra whom Bankimcandra styled "Banga Kabi-Kul-tilak", Sitaram to the memory of Rajkrsna Mukhopādhyay, Bisabrksa to Jagadisnath Ray, Kapalkundala to Sanjibcandra, Candrasekhar to Purnacandra.

To Dr. Rāmdās Sen with whom Bańkimcandra first discussed the plan of starting Bańgadarśan he dedicated Kamalākānter Daptar. (1) Bańkimcandra invited Nabīncandra Sen to write for Bańgadarśan and advised him to publish Palāśīr Yuddha. (2) Nabīncandra's poem Abakāśrañjinī was reviewed by Bańkimcandra in Bańgadarśan. (3) Nabīncandra dedicated Rańgamatī to Bańkimcandra. Between the two a great intimacy grew up and Bańkimcandra began to address Nabīncandra affectionately as "grandson". (4) They met at the time of the Exhibition held in Calcutta in 1883 and Nabīncandra was impressed by Bańkimcandra's sense of humour. (5)

Although Bańkimcandra was strict as an official, to his friends he was very affectionate and affable. Dīnabandhu and Bańkimcandra often spent pleasant hours in each other's company. To the collected works of Dīnabandhu

(1) Nikhilnāth Rāy - Dāktār Rāmdās Sen.

(2) Āmār Jīban, Vol. II, Pp. 225-6.

(3) Bibidha Prabandha, Gīti Kābya.

(4) Āmār Jīban, Vol. IV, Pp. 275-6.

(5) Ibid - Vol. III, Pp. 434-5.

published in 1877 Bankimcandra contributed an introduction as a mark of his deep regard. Among his European friends H. A. D. Phillips of the Indian Civil Service and C. E. Buckland deserve special mention. H. A. D. Phillips translated Kapālkuṇḍalā into English and Buckland paid a warm tribute to Bankimcandra in his book, "Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors".

Bankimcandra began to write in Bengali at a time when it was regarded as beneath the dignity of an educated man to do so. The language of the educated class was English and aspirant after aspirant sought fame with compositions in that language. (1) Bankimcandra not only wrote himself in Bengali but advised others to do so. When Rameścandra Datta urged his ignorance of Bengali style, Bankimcandra told him that whatever an educated man like him wrote would be style and taking that hint Rameścandra became a distinguished Bengali writer. (2) Bankimcandra was not content with being a writer himself. He liked others to write and generously encouraged them. Rabīndranāth has recorded how at the wedding of Rameścandra Datta's daughter

(1) See T.O.D. Dunn - Bengali Book of English Verse, India in Song, Bengali Writers of English Verse.

(2) R.C.Dutt - Literature of Bengal, pp. 225-26.

Bankimcandra garlanded him and praised his Evening Songs and the manner in which he did it amply rewarded the poet who was then young. (1) Perhaps the dictator of the realm of letters in Bengal of those days saw in his mind's eye the future greatness of the growing man of letters and could think of him as one who would be able worthily to carry on his great traditions.

(1) My Reminiscences, pp. 213-4.

CHAPTER IV

DURGĒŚNANDINĪ.

P L O T.

Tilottamā, daughter of Bīrendra Simha, chieftain of Māndāran in Bengal went to the temple of Saileśvar with Bimalā, who was really Bīrendra's wife but lived in his house incognito as a maidservant. To that place driven by storm came Jagat Simha, son of Rājā Mān Simha, the Rājput General of the Emperor Akbar. Jagat and Tilottamā fell in love with one another at first sight. Bimalā coming to know who he was asked him to meet her again at the temple after a fortnight. On the appointed day she came there and admitted him to Bīrendra's fortress by a secret passage to meet Tilottamā. The Mughuls and the Pāṭhāns (known also as Afghāns) were engaged at that time in fighting one another. Mān Simha had come to Bengal to subdue Katalu Khān, the Pāṭhān Sultan. Bīrendra sided with the Mughuls. Through the door left open through mistake by Bimalā, the Pāṭhān General, Osmān entered the castle with his soldiers and captured Bīrendra, Bimalā and Tilottamā. Jagat severely wounded after a hard struggle, fell into the hands of the Pāṭhāns unconscious. Katalu Khān's daughter Āyeṣā nursed Jagat and fell in love with him. Bīrendra was beheaded under Katalu's orders as a rebel. Bimalā vowed vengeance. Tilottamā came to see Jagat in the prison but was rudely repulsed as he had doubts of her

character since she had been living in the palace of Katalu. Āyeṣā's hidden love for Jagat was one day revealed to him when she was taunted by Osmān, who regarded Jagat as his rival for her love. On a festive occasion in the palace Bimalā killed Katalu and fled with Tilottamā. They took shelter with Birendra's spiritual preceptor Abhirām Svāmī. On his deathbed Katalu Khān prayed for peace and vouched for Tilottamā's character. Since her rebuff by Jagat, Tilottamā had been lying seriously ill and he went to see her as desired by Abhirām. When she recovered they were married. Āyeṣā came on the marriage-day bringing valuable presents for the bride. On her return to her father's palace she threw away the diamond ring by sucking which she had once thought of killing herself.

Durgeśnandinī was published in 1865. Critics have been unanimous in their opinion that Bańkimcandra's model was evidently European fiction. Rāmgati Nyāyaratna said, "Sanskrit literature was not the model of Bankim Babu's story. His model was English literature." (1) He remarked also, "The new note which marks its style is not seen in any Bengali work of an earlier date." (2) Some Western critics of Bańkimcandra's novels assign it to the influence of Scott. (3) Bańkimcandra is reported to have said that he had not read Scott's Ivanhoe before he wrote Durgeśnandinī. (4) Whether he had read it or not, the resemblance between Rebecca in Ivanhoe and Āyeṣā in Durgeśnandinī is striking is some respects. But in spite of some similarity between the two characters, Bańkimcandra's originality does not suffer to any great extent. Professor Cowell says, "It is far from being a mere servile copy." (5) That the work was something perfectly new was

(1) Bāṅgālā Bhāṣā o Bāṅgālā Sāhitya, P.321.

(2) Ibid - P. 324.

(3) ~~Marley - History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under British Rule, P.~~ 738; Buckland - Bengal under the Lt. Governors, Vol. II, P.1078.

(4) Bańkim Jībanī, P. 442.

(5) Macmillan's Magazine, 1871-72, P.460.

felt even in Bankimcandra's own day.[1]

On the title-page of some of the later editions of Durgeśnandinī, the work is described as "itibṛttamūlak upanyās", which means a novel based on history.[2] It is interesting to note here that Dāmodar Mukhopādhyāy wrote a sequel to this novel, NABĀBNANDINĪ which, however, is marred by its distortion of the events narrated by Bankimcandra.

The two principal male characters in the novel are Jagat Simha and Osmān. Both are born fighters, both are chivalrous, but while Osmān's attitude to the Rājput prince was actuated by policy and expediency, the prince had nothing but gratitude to the man who had saved his life. Osmān became terribly jealous when Āyeśā declared her love for the prince. In such a declaration of love some writers have scented Bankimcandra's anti-Muslim spirit.[3] But they conveniently forget that this great writer though he deeply loved his own race and religion was not in the least prejudiced against people of other faiths.[4]

(1) H. C. Raksit - Bangasāhitye Bankim, p. 52.

(2) 4th Edition (1871), 5th Edition (1874), 7th Edition (1879), 9th Edition (1882).

(3) Bhāratī, Vol. XXVII, pp. 29-30.

(4) Bangabānī, Baisākh, 1350 B.Y., p.387.

Writing as a novelist he thought it his duty to make no distinction whatsoever between one communiaty and another. If he had in the least been inclined to show the Muslim community at a disadvantage, he would never have delineated such lovable women as Āyeṣā and Dalanī Begam.

For Osmān one feels sympathy. A brave man, a capable general, a faithful officer, in affairs of the heart he was unfortunate. The Osmān of actual history was a brave warrior. When the Mughuls defeated the Pāthāns of Bengal in 1612, Osmān died after a hard day's fight rather than surrender to the Mughuls.(1) There is a difference of opinion among historians regarding his paternity. Some say that he was the son of Katalu Khān, others say that he was the son of Isa Khān Lohani.(2)

Jagat Simha's part in the plot is not that of a mere spectator as Henry Morton's in Scott's Old Mortality. He is actually concerned in the central episodes of the story. He is a faithful representation of the typical Rājput soldier who lived only for his honour. When he knew that he could not marry Tilottamā on account of her father's scruples, he did not

(1) Vincent Smith - Oxford History of India, p. 380.

(2) Stewart - History of Bengal, p. 237; Riyazu -s-Salatin, English Translation, p. 178.

like many other disappointed lovers look upon life as a burden. He sought solace in his duties as a soldier. There is, however, something unnatural and unbecoming in his entrance into the castle clandestinely. That was against all canons of gentlemanliness. This seems to be the only draw-back in his character. When he was misinformed that Tilottama was in the pleasure house of Katalu Khān he determined to forget her. As a Rājput he loved honour more than he prized love. But lest he should seem inhuman, the author gives us a picture of him sitting by the bed of Tilottamā and bringing her back to health by his tender ministrations. He combines in his character the sterner qualities of a soldier with the soft and tender qualities of a lover. He represents the Indian ideal of a person stronger than the thunder-bolt and softer than the flower.

Tilottamā and Āyeṣā are symbols of pure and unsullied maidenhood. Tilottamā was she younger of the two. She was a mere girl inexperienced in the ways of the world. She fell in love regardless of all consequences. It came as an avalanche and nearly crushed her. In Abhirām Svāmi's forecast that she would meet with denger from a general of

the Mughuls, Bankimcandra touches on the idea of fate which is present in so many of his novels.(1) He had made a considerable study of astrology.(2) The apparently hopeless passion of Tilottamā nearly cost her her life. When the prince received her in the prison so coldly she said nothing.(3) When they met again she did not refer to the past. A tender and drooping maiden, young, beautiful, she is one of the most charming of a series of similar characters so ably portrayed by Bankimcandra.

Āyeṣā was older than Tilottamā and was accomplished in matters of state as well. She was old enough to understand the world and bestow her love on a worthy person. Osmān had fruitlessly wooed her for years. The very fact that they had known each other for years stood in the way of any romantic attachment that she might have felt for him. The Prince came as a surprise to her life. He was like someone from a book of romance and he easily captivated her imagination. As through the long days of his illness

(1) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. I, Ch. VI.

(2) A Few Sayings & Opinions of Bankim Chandra, P. 17 f.

(3) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. II, Ch. XIII.

she nursed him with the devotion of a loving woman, she became enamoured of him. Still, she tried her best to conceal her love knowing that it was hopeless. Not only did they belong to different religions, Jagat loved another. But these facts had nothing to do with her love. She loved him careless of all hope of return. She completely controlled her feelings, but in the prison-house, when Osmān taunted her, she gave way and her pent-up feelings found bold expression. (1) The letter that she wrote to Jagat was no ordinary love-letter. "I do not crave for your love," she wrote, "what I had to give, I have given you freely. I do not ask for any return. My affection is so deeply rooted that I am happy even without your love." (2) It was no wonder that Jagat thought of her as "the glory of the fair sex." (3)

There is another woman in the story who deserves notice. Critics have found more than one fault in Bankimcandra's delineation of Bimalā's character. One critic says that in her character there are occasional traces of

(1) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. II, Ch. XV.

(2) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. XIX.

(3) Ibid.

humour of a low type.[1] Considering the difficult situations she had sometimes to extricate herself from she had to stoop to certain things unavoidable under the circumstances. The so-called unnaturalness in her character is on the surface only. Allowance can be made for the jokes she enjoyed at the expense of Gajapati Vidyādiggaj. Bankimcandra was probably thinking of the royal ladies in the dramas of Kālidāse and other Sanskrit writers making fun of jesters like Mādhabya and Basantaka, when he made Bimalā and her maid Āsmanī play tricks upon Gajapati. Another critic has found fault with the description of Bimalā dressing herself.[2] This is rather absurd. It was certainly improper as well as impolitic on her part to admit a stranger within the inner apartments of the palace. But even in this she was actuated by an unselfish desire to make Tilottamā happy. She did not foresee the consequences. After she had avenged herself for Nīrendra's death she became the ghost of her former self and was quietly removed from the final scene by the author. She was no longer necessary.

(1) Girijāprasanna Rāycaudhurī - Bankimcandra, Pt. II, p.5.
(2) Pūrnacandra Basu - Kābyasundarī, P. 160.

Abhirām Svāmī marks the beginning of the series of Bankimcandra's "Sannyāsī" characters. He belongs to the same class as Rāmānanda Svāmī in Candraśekhar, Mādhabācārya in Mṛṇālinī and Candracūr in Sītārām. These men were skilled in religious and temporal matters. They embodied the ancient Hindu ideals of the "Guru" who advised his disciples on both spiritual and worldly affairs. Not living in the forest-hermitages, they knew the ways of the world, yet they could keep themselves aloof and detached.

The humour of Bengali writers before Bankimcandra was marked by vulgarity and bad taste. Even Bankimcandra's friend Dīnabandhu Mitra was not free from this fault. But Bankimcandra's picture of the dull and comical Gajapati was something new. Gajapati was a disciple of Abhirām. Though a Brāhman, he could learn nothing, and was devoid even of common sense. A coward who thought himself a gallant he was a butt of the ridicule of Bimalā and Āsmānī. He is a type of the foolish hangers-on of rich people and reminds one of the Vidusaka in Sanskrit dramas on whom he is a distinct improvement. The reason for introducing him into the novel seems to have been a desire to relieve the serious

element in the story. Bankimcandra made fun of the traditional "panditmurkha". With his ludicrous appearance, stale humour and timid ways Vidyadiggaj is more to be pitied than laughed at. The description of Asmani's beauty is a marvellous piece of humour. (1) It shows how humour can be clothed in beautiful and elegant language preserving at the same time the lighter tone. Asmani's love-making is audacious and she goes a bit too far with her practical jokes. In his description of Asmani's beauty Bankimcandra is ridiculing hyperbolical writers in Sanskrit and Bengali.

The central story in Durgesnandini is not a pure figment of imagination. It was a traditional story in Jahanabad. (2) But Bankimcandra linked up many imaginary incidents with it. The main outlines of the Mughul attempts to subdue the Pathans in Bengal are correct. To suit his own convenience the author made changes in details. The Mughul invasions of Bengal began long before Man Simha was sent as Viceroy. Before

(1) Durgesnandini, Pt. I, Ch. XII.

(2) Rahasya Sandarbha, Pt. XXI, P. 140.

him Munim Khān, Raja Todar Mall and Azīm Khān came as Governors of the province, but the skirmishes between the Mughuls and the Pāṭhāns never ceased during the period. In one history of the time we find that Mān Simha was appointed Governor of Bengal on the accession of the Emperor Jahāngīr and was recalled after eight months. (1) Stewart says that Jagat Simha was taken prisoner by artifices and Katalu Khān really died a matural death. After his death Jagat was released and through him the Pāṭhāns sued for peace, as a result of which the young sons of Katalu visited Mān Simha and agreed to obey the Emperor as overlord. (2) Bankimcandra could have been more charitable to Katalu Khān. But a story-teller needs a villain for his own purposes and hence ~~the character of the~~ Pāṭhān Sultan is depicted as a vile and vicious monarch.

The novel takes the reader to the days of Pāṭhān rule in Bengal. Was there any particular reason why Bankimcandra chose this period of history as the back-ground of his first novel? Professor Cowell thinks that the author placed the story in the times of Akbar as that

(1) Riyazu-s-Salatin, P. 168.

(2) Stewart - History of Bengal, pp. 208-9; Elphinstone - History of India, p. 500.

ruler had left such a deep mark on the Hindu mind. (1) It might have been Bankimcandra's sympathy for the Pāṭhāns of Bengal that led him to picture a time when they challenged the supremacy of the Mughuls. Moreover in some accounts of this period the Pāṭhān rebellion was not impartially treated as the sympathy of the historians was with the Mughuls. (2) Writing long after, even a modern historian like Vincent Smith remarks about the end of the independent Kingdom of Bengal, "Its disappearance need not excite the slightest feeling of regret. The Kings, mostly of Afghan origin, were mere military adventurers, lording it over a submissive Hindu population, the very existence of which is ignored by history." (3) Bankimcandra introduced the Pāṭhāns in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto. He thought that the ancient traditions and high spirit of the Pāṭhāns would not only be a subject worthy of a novel, but it would also go a long way towards vindicating those virtues of the Pāṭhāns that had received scant justice at the hands of historians.

(1) Macmillan's Magazine, 1871-72; p. 455.

(2) Riyazu-s-Salatin, p. 175, one of the bravest Pāṭhān Generals is called "that wretched man". For the Afghān insurrections, See: Briggs-Ferishta, Vo. II.

(3) V.A.Smith - Akbar the Great Mogul, p. 146.

CHAPTER V

KAPĀLKUṆḌALĀ.

P L O T.

A young man Nabakumār while returning from Gangāsāgar was left by accident in a dense jungle by his companions and met a Tāntrik Kāpālik. The Kāpālik had brought up a maiden Kapālkuṇḍalā, who saved Nabakumār's life from immediate death at the hands of her foster-father, and brought him to the temple of Bhabānī at Hijli where they were married by the temple-priest. On the way to his own house Nabakumār met a Muslim woman Mati Bibi. She was really Padmābatī, his first wife, who had been discarded by him in early youth as her parents had embraced the faith of Islam. She recognised her husband but did not make herself known to him. From that day she desired to be re-united to him. Nabakumār came to Saptagram with Kapālkuṇḍalā and began to live there. Thither came also Mati Bibi after a year, being baffled in her intrigues in Agra and Delhi, and begged for her husband's love, which, of course, he refused. Her next aim was to bring about the separation of Nabakumār and Kapālkuṇḍalā. One night Naba saw his wife going to the forest alone and following her saw her speaking to an unknown man, really no other than Mati Bibi in disguise, who had decoyed Kapālkuṇḍalā there. The

Kāpālik was also in league with Moti Bibi. He had come to Saptogram to wreak vengeance on Kapālkundalā because she had foiled his intention of offering Nabakumār as a human sacrifice to Kālī. He met Nabà in the jungle and made him believe that his wife was unfaithful to him. Under the Kāpālik's malignant influence Nabakumār agreed to punish his wife by offering her as a sacrifice before the goddess Bhabānī. Kapālkundalā was led to the banks of the Ganges to be sacrificed. In the course of conversation with her Naba came to know that she was innocent of any infidelity to him. While they were talking, a huge wave dashed against the bank and Kapālkundalā fell into the waters. Nabakumār jumped down to rescue her but neither of them was seen again.

It should be mentioned here that in the first edition of Kapālkundalā, the heroine is accidentally drowned in the river and Nabakumār, who jumped after her was rescued by the Kāpālik. In later editions the story is in its present form.

Kapālkundalā was published in 1866. (1) It was at Nagoya or Nogua (now known at Contai in the Midnapore district) that Bankimcandra met the Kāpālik who was his model for that important character in K Kapālkundalā. Dariapur, Daulatpur and Rasulpur are villages in Midnapore and the natural scenery of those places was the background of this novel. The people of Midnapore encouraged by the interest shown by an English member of the Indian Civil Service set up some years ago a tablet in the courtyard of the old temple at Dariapur to commemorate Bankimcandra's conception of Kapālkundalā. (2)

Dāmodar Mukhopādhyāy's Mṛnmayī (1874), written as a sequel to Kapālkundalā, was published with Bankimcandra's permission. It is a pity that a writer inferior in merit to Bankimcandra should have been allowed

(1) Krsnadās Pāl was writing in 1870 to Dr. Sambhu Chandra Mookerjee to review Kapālkundalā in the Hindu Patriot, which Dr. Mookerjee did. (Bengal: Past and Present, Vol. IX, July-December, 1914, p. 146) This review then must have been of the second edition which was published in 1869 or 1870 and certainly proves that the Calcutta Review was not correct in its opinion that Kapālkundalā was unpopular. (Calcutta Review, 1873, 1876, Notices of Vernacular Books.)

(2) Bhāratbarsa, Vol. XI, Pt. I, p.87.

to distort history and spoil much of its beauty. But as Dāmodar was related to him, Bankimcandra perhaps felt it, impossible to object.

The subject matter of Kapālkuṇḍalā is not historical. Though the book contains references to historical events and characters, the novelist is more engaged with the feelings and sentiments that rise in the human heart, the chords of passion that are struck in human nature in conflict with circumstances. In a romantic atmosphere, on the brink of the sea, Nabakumār met a divinely beautiful woman. It was a dramatic meeting. But it was not love at first sight. The background of the story is romantic and picturesque. There is even something strange and weird in it. The providential meeting of these two people was followed by fateful events. The belief in destiny is again and again stressed by Bankimcandra in this novel, but to trace it to the influence of Greek fatalism as some critics do is not quite correct. (1) The Hindu like the Greek was equally prone to attribute the course of his life to the influence of destiny or fate. It was nothing new that Bankimcandra was propounding. He was merely voicing the belief shared

(1) P. C. Basu-Kābyasundarī, p. 89.

by hundreds and thousands of people in India.

Stolen eerly in infancy by Portuguese pirates and left on the seaside, Kapālkuṇḍalā was brought up in a lonely place. (1) The only other humen being she knew was the Kāpālik who had brought her up with a view of fulfilling his own foul ends when she was of age. The Kāpālik was the follower of a creed which paid "little heed to the orthodox view advocating the necessity of restraining the senses for spiritual advancement". (2) Sexual relationship with woman was part of his religious worship. (3) But Kapālkuṇḍalā knew nothing of this nor anything of the world. She was living far away from other people and had not the slightest knowledge of the outside world.

When she was married she could not adapt herself to a life which restrained her freedom. She had not even any idea of the meaning of marriage. (4) The premonition that her marriage would end in disaster came

(1) The Portuguese pirates of Chittagong were in the habit of raiding parts of Bengal, capturing people and selling them as slaves - Bernier - Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp.175-6.

(2) M.M.Bose - The Post - Caitanya Sahajiā Cult of Bengal, p. 120.

(3) Journal of the Department of Letters, Calcutta University, 1927, Vol. XVI, p. 27.

(4) Kapālkuṇḍalā, Pt. I. Ch. VIII.

to her mind again and again. (1) More than once she had visions of supernatural beings. Once she dreamt of an overturned boat and herself drowned. (2) On the fateful night of her death she saw the awe-inspiring shape of the goddess Kālī in the sky. Kapālkuṇḍalā was affectionate and ready to help others. She readily offered to help her sister-in-law Syāmāsundarī in getting some herbs which were supposed to bring her her husband's love.

In Kapālkuṇḍalā's life love had no great influence. (3) There was no outward manifestation of it, but she was not devoid of those finer instincts which characterise women. Bankimcandra has shown Kapālkuṇḍalā in several stages of her life. At first she was the virgin in the wild forests. Then she was married but her entry into the world did not make any great change in her character. In her heart she was the same innocent maiden longing for the woods where she felt quite at home. She could not bear the glare of the world and it killed her.

(1) Kapālkuṇḍalā, Pt.I. Ch. IX, Pt. II, Ch. VI.

(2) Ibid - Pt. IV, Ch. III.

(3) Ibid - Pt. IV, Ch. VIII.

Many Bengali writers are fond of comparing her with Śakuntalā and Miranda. The comparison has become rather hackneyed. Śakuntalā and Miranda both knew something of the world. Śakuntalā had companions and guardians in the hermitage. Miranda had her father. But Kapālkuṇḍalā's character was wholly formed by the lovely forests amidst which she had grown up. From the great deep she came and to the great deep she went.

Mati Bibi, Padmāvatī or Lutfunnesā (she was known by all these names) was an intelligent and self-assertive woman, but quite lacking in self-restraint. Ambition ruled her heart and she had no moral scruples. To her over-sexed nature Nabakumār appealed as another victim to be sacrificed. Still, the meeting with her husband partially changed her life. Her vanity was mortally wounded when she saw Kapālkuṇḍalā's beauty. She was too selfish and thought of captivating Nabakumār by her beauty. As the fascination which she felt for her husband had not its basis in real love she planned to have him by any means - fair or foul. Her offers were met with cold refusal. Her passion had germinated rather abruptly, it stupefied her and she lost her

balance. As a dramatic finish to a passionate scene she proudly said to Nabakumār, "Never in this life shall I give up hope of you." (1) It had dawned upon her late in life that happiness could be found in ordinary ways of life, that without love life was nothing to a woman. But it was too late. She had revelled too long in the enjoyment of the senses. She had never known the disciplines of life. Once only her better nature asserts itself when she warns Kapālkuṇḍalā of the Kāpālik's murderous intentions. (2) The importance of her character lies in its value as a contrast enhancing the gracefulness of Kapālkuṇḍalā. In many of Bankimcandra's novels there are similar contrasted pairs of characters, e.g., in Candraśekhar there are Dalanī and Śaibalinī, Foster and Taki Khān, Mīr Kāsim and Candraśekhar.

The feminine element predominates in this novel and Nabakumar is a rather unconvincing and undeveloped character. He is too lopsided. His marriage with Kapālkuṇḍalā was a sudden affair and he readily believed the Kāpālik's tale of (her

(1) Kapālkuṇḍalā, Pt. III, Ch. VI.

(2) Ibid - Pt. IV, Ch. VII.

infidelity to him. In spite of his being a man of impulses, there was considerable generosity in his nature. He loved his wife. Like Othello he never had thought of clearing up the mystery, but harboured unfounded suspicions against Kapālkuṇḍalā. One of the redeeming features in his character is his stern moral code which made it possible for him to rise above the temptations held out by Mati Bibi. The Brāhman decided to remain poor rather than become the paramour of a woman whom he regarded as an infidel.

In this novel Bankimcandra made a mild hit at Kulīnism which was a disgraceful social scandal in his days and which had as its victims thousands of women in Bengal. In the periodical press of the previous decade Kulīnism had been pilloried. (1) Rāmnārāyaṇ Tarkaratna had condemned it in his play, Kulīn Kulsarbasva. Dīnabandhu Mitra's drama, Jāmāi Bārik, gives a realistic glimpse of the humorous aspect of this social evil. In 1856 the movement against Kulīn polygamy was started and it went on for twenty years. Ten years later a petition

(1) Dharmarāj, 1852-53, Vol. I, Pts. 3, 4, 6, 7; Kalikātā Patrikā, 1858. Paridarśak, 13th December, 1861.

signed by twenty-one thousand people was submitted to Sir Cecil Beadon, then Lt. Governor of Bengal, praying for legal measures for the suppression of Kulīnism. (1) Pṇdit Īśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar denounced Kulīn polygamy in BAHUBIBĀHA. Bankimcandra could not escape the influence of the time. In an essay on this subject originally published in Bangadarśan, he condemned polygamy although differing from Vidyāsāgar on certain points. (2) The Press in subsequent years did not cease to write against Kulīnism. (3) The intensity of public indignation against it can easily be understood by a glance at the number of books and tracts that were written on the subject by both men and women writers. (4)

The Tāntrik Kāpālik's misguided religious zeal and abominable rites of worship are so vividly drawn

(1) Candīcaṛan Bandyopādhyāy - Vidyasagar, pp. 387-89.

(2) Bibidha Prabandha, Pt. II.

(3) Sulabh Samācār, 1870-71, p. 104.

(4) Kulīn Kanyā (1874), Kulīn Biraha (1882), Kulīnkirtan (1874), Kulkālimā (1873), Kaulīnya-Samsodhinī (1871), Kulrahasya Kābya (1877), Ballālī-Samsodhinī (1868), Cittabilāsinī (1857).

by Bankimcandra obviously with the intention of exposing the hideousness of Tāntrik practices. Bankimcandra's description of the Kāpālik corresponds with the customary description of the Tāntrik worshipper - ashes on the body, a garland of human heads round the neck, collyrium in his eyes, knotted hair, a garment of tiger-skin, a girdle, a human skull in his hand. (1) The Kāpālik resembles other specimens of the same type in Indian literature. (2)

Regarding Tāntrikism and Bankimcandra's attitude towards it nothing would be a better commentary than what Rev. K. M. Banerjea once wrote, "The best practical exposé of the illicit union is contained in that great Bengali romance, the Kapalkundala. The great Tantric hero of that inimitable novel is Kapalica, a representative worshipper of Bhabani and Bhairavi, as personations of Sakti or Prakriti. This man is described as an eremite far from towns and villages, adopting and fostering foundling girls, and waylaying and decoying

(1) Tattvabodhinī Patnikā, Pt. IV, p. 329.

(2) Aghoraghanta in Mālatimādhaba; Act V; Somasiddhānta in Prabodhacandrodaya, Act. III; Bhairabānanda in Karpūramañjarī, Act. I.

benighted young man, only to sacrifice them before the shrine of his goddess, because the Tantric cannot accomplish his worship without human flesh, and because without violating the chastity of women, the Tantric cannot attain perfection. Those allegations in the Kapalkundala are fully justified by passages contained in the Tantras." (1)

Many years after this novel had been written, Bankimcandra said about Tantrikism, "I have in no respect departed from the view I put forward and illustrated in Kapalkundala in regard to the morality of that form of Hinduism. True Hinduism and Tantrikism are as opposed to each other as light and darkness..... let it never be assumed that Tantrikism is the general religion of the Hindus; no one, I believe, has ever thought of making such an assumption." (2)

In recent times attempts have been made to represent the Tantras in a less revolting light. Sir John Woodroffe says, "The Tantra Shastra stands for a principle of high value though, like things admittedly good, it is capable

(1) Statesman, 14th November, 1882.

(2) Statesman, 22nd November, 1882.

of, and has suffered abuse." (1) To what extent Tāntrikism had degenerated in the earlier part of the nineteenth century can best be understood if one glances even casually over the pages of some of the Calcutta periodicals, which led a crusade against all kinds of undesirable elements, in moral and social life. (2) It is true that Tantrikism was a powerful influence in its flourishing days. Bankimcandra was fully conscious of the influence it exerted upon Vaiṣṇavism. (3) But what he thought of it in its degenerate stage is fully illustrated in Kapālkuṇḍalā and there is not the least doubt that he condemned such religious malpractices as the Kāpālik indulged in.

As an attempt at a picture of life in Bengal more than three hundred years ago, Kapālkuṇḍalā is interesting. It not only gives an insight into Bengali domestic life as it was in times gone by, but affords a glimpse into the affairs of the imperial court of Delhi, far from the scene of its main activities. This novel is a remarkable study in contrasts

(1) Shakti and Shakta, p. 31.

(2) Tattvabodhinī Patrikā, Pt. IV, Series I, No. 41.

(3) Kṛṣṇacaritra, Pt. II, Ch. X.

With the quiet and peaceful life of a Bengali in Saptagram are contrasted the conspiracies and counter-conspiracies in Delhi and Agra, in which Padmāvatī participated. There is Kapālkuṇḍalā who was brought up in the forests knowing nothing of the world, and there is Mati Bibi, who had already seen too much of the shady side of life. There is the gay life of the court in Delhi on the one hand, and on the other, there is the simple life of Nabakumār in his home. Last of all there is that vast loneliness of the forests which looms large in the background of the story, and stands in marked contrast both to the splendour of Delhi and to the rural environments of Saptagram.

C H A P T E R VI

M R Ṇ Ā L I N Ī

P L O T.

Hemcandra, a prince of Magadha, was secretly married to Mṛṇālinī, daughter of a merchant of Mathurā. Bakhtyar Khalji had recently taken possession of Magadha and was threatening Bengal. Mādhabācārya, Hemcandra's preceptor, thinking that Mṛṇālinī was an osbtacle to Hemcandra's career had her brought by stratagem to the house of his disciple, Hṛṣīkeś Śarmā at Lakṣmaṇabatī (Gauṛ) Hemcandra employed a beggar-girl, Girijāyā, to trace his wife and she succeeded in finding her. But in the meantime Hemcandra had to leave for the court of Lakṣmaṇ Sen at Nabadvīp to fulfil a promise made by Mādhabācārya to render help to Lakṣmaṇ Sen in dealing with the threat of a Muhammadan invasion. Lakṣmaṇ's chief officer, Paśupati, was in league with the Muslims and had tutored the court-pandits to declare that Bengal was fated to be conquered by the Muslims. Paśupati resented the arrival of Hemcandra at Nabadvīp and made an unsuccessful attempt upon his life. After he was wounded Hemcandra was nursed by Manoramā, the adopted daughter of a disciple of Mādhabācārya. Manoramā was generally supposed to be a widow, but had really been married as a child to Paśupati and she herself knew that

he was her husband, though he did not know who she was and had in the meantime fallen in love with her. Mṛṇālinī in order to preserve her good name felt compelled to leave the house of Hṛṣīkeś and came with Giri jāyā to Nabadvīp. Mādhabācārya told Hemcandra that Mṛṇālinī had been turned out by Hṛṣīkeś for her misconduct. So when they met he left her in rage and disgust. The Muslims entered Nabadvīp without any opposition. Paśupati's house was set on fire and when he entered it to find Manoramā, whom he had locked in there intending to marry her, the house fell down and he was killed. Manoramā had in the meantime escaped. Byomkeś, Hṛṣīkeś's son cleared Mṛṇālinī's character. Manoramā died on Paśupati's funeral pyre. With the wealth left by her to Hemcandra, he founded a kingdom in the south and lived happily with Mṛṇālinī. Giri jāyā married Hemcandra's attendant Digbijay.

Mṛṇālinī described by the author himself on the title-page of the first edition as "aitihāsik upanyās" was published in 1869. Hemcandra by Surendramohan Bhaṭṭācārya, a sequel to Mṛṇālinī, was published in 1905. The atmosphere of the original novel is present in it, but it lacks in

The action of Mṛṇālinī takes place in the period of the Muslim conquest of Bengal and the decay of the Hindu power. The decrepit old king Lakṣman Sen was thinking

Hindu power. The decrepit old king Lakṣman Sen was thinking

more of his approaching death than of resisting the Muslim invaders. His Brāhman advisers were in the pay of his enemies and their explanation that such a happening was foretold in the holy books satisfied the aged monarch.(1) Bankimcandra regarded the story of the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtyar Khalji and his few horsemen as an untrustworthy myth. (2) In this novel he looked at history from the point of view of an impartial observer. History had to be written

(1) Tabakat-I-Nasiri, pp. 556-57; Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, p. 46; "The predictions, as recorded by Muslim historians, were strangely minute in matters of detail, but these historians wrote after the event, and the original texts which they cite cannot be traced."

(2) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. IV, Ch. IV, V; Collected Works, Vol. II, p. 632.

anew and as a student of facts, Bankimchandra could not accept without challenge the garbled version that unreliable historians offered.

In his own novels he has not been very strict about historical accuracy, but the fundamental facts of history and historical fiction are two quite different things. Whenever he has been at variance with history, it has been in minor details. To the broader issues of history he has been true. To one of his friends, Bankimchandra wrote, "I have advised you to keep clear of history, but I cannot advise you to run counter to history. Even this you may do so far as individual characters are concerned, but I am hardly bold enough to advise you to do so in the case of large national movements." (1)

Here, at least, his contentions have been borne out by modern researches. The original account given in the Tabakat-i-Nasiri is an exaggeration of facts either of the historian himself or his informants. (2) The Riyazu-s-salatin gives an almost similar account of the conquest of Bengal by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. (3) The

(1) N.C. Sen - Āmār Jīban, Vol. IV, p. 126 f.

(2) Tabakat-I-Nasiri, pp.557-58; Indian Historical quarterly, 1927, p. 127.

(3) Pp. 62-66 (English translation).

Cambridge History of India says, "Some suspicion rests on details of this account which, is drawn from Muslim sources."(1) It was not Bakhtyar who captured Nadiā and expelled Laksman Sen but Muhammad Khalji, son of Bakhtyar. (2) H.G.Raverty, the translator of Tabakat-I-Nasiri, says that in the more recent copies of the text, the word "son of" has been left out and thus with European and some local Indian Muhammadan historians, the father has had the credit for what the son performed. (3) Recently it has been doubted whether this Laksman Sen was really king of Bengal at that time. (4) Bankimcandra cannot be blamed for confusing Bakhtyar with his son as the former was for years regarded as the first Muslim invader of Bengal.

Though Mrnālinī has an historical background the principal characters are purely imaginary. The dream of a Hindu empire in Magadha was gone for ever, but some hope

(1) Vol. III, p. 46.

(2) Smith - Oxford History of India, p. 221; Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVII, p. 76; Bengal District Gazetteer (Nadia), pp. 23-25.

(3) Tabakat-I-Nasiri, p. 548 (English translation).

(4) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, January, 1930, Article on "Chronology of the Sena Kings of Bengal". The writer says that Laksman died long before the Muslim invasion of Bengal.

still lurked in the heart of Mādhabācārya, one of those visionary characters who figure somewhat prominently in the novels of Bankimcandra. Hemcandra, prince of Magadha, was chosen todbuild up a new kingdom. He is a brave and patriotic young man. With him Bankimcandra introduced a series of characters which stand for Hindu supremacy and domination. Hemcandra's manliness is marred to some extent by his sudden fits of anger and incredulity. At times he is rough and overbearing. (1) He lacks the princely grace and courtesy of Jagat Simha and is more of the rough and ready soldier. He readily believed the story of Mṛṇālinī's unfaithfulness. He generously offered his services to the aged King Lakṣman Sen. When the Muslims attacked Nabadvīp, he helped the citizens in their distress as far as possible.

The mainspring of Mṛṇālinī's character was her deep love for Hemcandra. Nothing could shake the foundations of that love and her faith in him. Even when it was suggested that Hemcandra was in love with another, she was quite sure that he belonged to her and her only.

(1) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. I, Ch. IV, Pt. III, Ch. VIII, and Ch. X.

She never murmured, she never argued or complained of her cruel treatment by Hemcandra. It was because she was perfectly sure of her love that through suffering she passed unscathed without any bitterness or resentment towards Hemcandra. Even when she was harshly treated, her only anxiety was for his safety. (1)

Manoramā is a sort of riddle. At times she would be very grave and serious and at others playful. She is a complex character and her discourse on love shows the reflective element in her nature. (2) Yet, her love like herself was enigmatical. Did she really love Paśupati? He was her husband and she must have felt some kind of attachment for him, but one is not sure how much she loved him. She prized virtue highly and Paśupati as a traitor was repulsive to her. Still she capitulated to his advances of marriage, though that could not take place owing to the attack of the Muslims on the city. She was a woman of moods and her beauty was different from Mṛṇālinī's. Manoramā was

(1) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. IV, Ch. IX.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. VI.

like a goddess made of flowers, like a lotus which blooms with the rise of the morning sun, Mṛṇālinī was like a lotus in the rainy season, modest in its own beauty.(1)

Girijāyā was Mṛṇālinī's devoted companion. Behind her outward gaiety and playfulness there was a note of seriousness or gravity which is evident from her songs. She was outspoken and was not afraid even to give Hemcandra a bit of her mind whenever he was in one of his fits of temper and moods of rage. Girijāyā said, "You are a hero! You have come to exhibit such heroism in Nadiā? There was no need of it - you could have exhibited it in Magadha. Again she said, "You to marry Mṛṇālinī? You are not even worthy of me." (2) Her courtship was rather primitive and she thrashed Digbijay with a broomstick as if it were the most natural thing to do. (3) She occupies a place second only to Bimalā in importance among the minor female characters in the first three novels of Bankimcandra.

Pasupati was a capable man, but political motives made him entirely devoid of all sense of gratitude to his master. Ambition added to unscruplousness led to his ruin and after the sack of Nabadvīp by the Muslims when he saw that his own hopes of ascending the throne had melted away, he

(1) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. II, Ch.VIII, Pt.I, Ch. IV.
(2) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. III, Ch. VIII.
(3) Ibid - Pt. IV, Ch. X.

became a wiser man. Pasúpati had created a rather inconvenient posi tion for himself without in the least foreseeing that when the Muslims came to power, he would be the last man to be trusted by them. He refused at first to be converted to Islam when Bakhtyar Khalji pressed upon him the necessity of doing so, but eventually had to suffer even the indignity of wearing the dress of the Muhammadans when threatened with force by the Muslim envoy. He had already guessed that the Muslims were not his friends and he himself was the cause of his own undoing, having lost in addition everything that a man might prize in life. He expiated all his sins in his death under tragic circumstances. His thoughts in his last moments were of Manoramā and in a mad frenzy as he tugged at the golden image of the goddess, whom he worshipped every day, he fell stunned by the debris of the building which collapsed. His death amidst the flames was a fitting conclusion to his career.

In the treachery of Pasupati, in the meanness of his lieutenant Śāntaśīl, a renegade who entered the service of the Muslims after the extinction of the Hindu power and earned a living by slandering his own race, and in the despicable conduct of Brāhmaṇs like Rāmodar Śarmā, Bankimcandra has depicted certain

characteristic national weaknesses. But those characters are inevitable in a novel which deals with calamitous times in the history of a people and are primarily intended as a warning to others, who might step into similar pitfalls and go down to history as ignominious traitors.

CHAPTER VII

BIṢADRKṢA

P L O T

Nagendranāth, Zamindar of Gobindapur, on his way to Calcutta, was compelled to seek shelter in a house on account of a storm. There he found an old man on the point of death and his daughter Kundanandinī. After the old man's death, Kunda was brought to Calcutta by Nagendranāth and left in charge of his sister Kamal. Later she came to Gobindapur. Nagendra's wife Sūryamukhī married Kunda to a young man, Tārācaran. After Tārācaran's premature death Kunda came to live at Nagendra's house. Nagendra was enamoured of her and Kunda also fell in love with him. Debendra Datta, Zamindar of Debipur was also charmed with Kunda's beauty and visited Nagendra's house disguised as a Vaiṣṇavī in order to meet her. The maidservant Hīrā found out thetrick and informed her mistress. In the meantime Sūryamukhī had realised that her husband was in love with Kunda. She wrote to Kamal explaining the whole situation. Kamal wanted to take Kunda to Calcutta. One night Kunda tried to commit suicide, but she was unsuccessful in her attempt. Later she left the house on account of Suryamūkhī's continual rebukes. She was given shelter by Hīrā. When Nagendra came to know that his wife was

responsible for Kunda's going away, he determined to leave his home in disgust. Kunda came back one day and Sūryamukhī insisted on her husband taking her as his second wife. Sūryamukhī then left the house. Nagendra finding out how much he loved his first wife, started in search of her. He neglected Kunda thinking her to be the cause of Sūryamukhī's disappearance. In the meantime Sūryamukhī having fallen ill on the way, had been living in the house of a Brahmacārī. Nagendra was wrongly informed that she was dead and he decided to forsake the world. On the night of his arrival at Gobindapur after a futile search for Sūryamukhī, she returned and was reunited to him. Kunda poisoned herself. Hīrā had been seduced by Debendra Datta and became insane. Debendra died a victim of foul diseases.

Bisabṛkṣa was published in 1873. It had appeared previously in serial form in Baṅgadarśan. About its popularity a contemporary periodical wrote, "This novel .....was to be found in the baitakhana of every Bengali Babu throughout the whole of last year." (1) A very discerning observer remarks, "Bisabṛkṣa stirred every mind in the homes of Bengal. It brought with it something which was within our own experience." (2) Rev. Lālbihāri De, on the other hand, wrote a review of it in the Bengal Magazine, which Baṅkimcandra thought was "faint praise and civil sneer." That the wellknown Bengali periodical Somprakās did not speak highly of it is clear from the author's letter to a friend. (3) A contemporary writer thought that Kunda's suicide was likely to have an evil influence on Bengali life. (4) Another writer objected to

(1) Calcutta Review, 1873, P. V.

(2) Prabāsī, Vol. XXXI, Pt. I, P. 806 f.

(3) Bengal: Past and Present, April-June, 1914, p. 283. In Mookerjee's Magazine (October, 1873, pp.542-44) an article appeared, part of which was meant for those critics, who disparaged the writings of Baṅkimcandra. Baṅkimcandra's friend Dr. Sambhu Chandra Mookerjee wrote it under the pen name of "An Amateur Homeopath.".

(4) P. C. Basu - Sāhityacintā, p. 52.

such things as kissing and embracing by some of the characters. (1) Criticisms like these are really petty. Nor can much credence be given to what Nabīncandra Sen writes in his auto-biography. He says that late in life Baṅkimcandra confided to him, "I wonder whether I have done good or evil to the country by my novels." (2) It does not seem probable that Baṅkimcandra would speak in such a way about his own works when there is no other instance of his having done so. He certainly was not referring to Biṣabṛkṣa, which was popular with Western readers also. Sir Edwin Arnold paid a high tribute to it. (3) Bengali women even in the nineties of the last century were fond of it and one of them wrote a series of poems on the women characters of this novel. (4)

Biṣabṛkṣa is distinctly a novel with a purpose. The central problem in the story is the question of polygamy and incidentally the question of widow remarriage

(1) Mahendranāth Majumdār - Sāhitya o Samāj, p. 40.

(2) Āmār Jīban, Vol. IV, p. 363.

(3) Preface to Mrs. Knight's "Poison Tree".

(4) Sāhitya, Vol. II.

is broached by Bańkimcandra, ~~who makes it quite clear that complications arise in cases when there is another wife.~~ His ideas about widow marriage are to some extent understood from Sūryamukhī's letter to Kamal, "A learned pandit in Calcutta, named Iśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar, has published a book on the marriage of widows. If he who would establish the custom of marrying widows is a pandit, then who can be called a dunce?" (1) Nagendra consoled himself with the thought that widow remarriage was sanctioned by the Śāstras and no one would dare to outcast him from society as he was a wealthy man. (2) Truly did Kamal remark, "In what respect he is to blame, God knows, but what delusions he cherishes! I think men understand nothing." (3)

Before Bańkimcandra wrote this novel there had been a compact body of public opinion in favour of widow remarriage. (4) It is rather peculiar that a man of the

(1) Bisabṛkṣa, Ch. XI Vidyāsāgar's Bidhabābibāha was published in 1854-55 and an English translation of it appeared in 1856.

(2) Bisabṛkṣa, Ch. XXV.

(3) Bisabṛkṣa, Ch. XXVI.

(4) Dramas like Bidhabāmanoraṅjan (1856), Bidhabā-parinayotsab (1857), Bidhabābibāha Nātak (1857), Bidhabodbāha Nātak (1856), Bidhabābil(ās Nātak (1864), openly advocated the remarriage of widows.

new school like him could not lend full support to this movement. It may be that his pride as a Brahman stood in the way of his completely identifying himself with such a cause. Bańkimcandra made himself more explicit in another place. He adopted a via media. In his opinion it was not absolutely well for all widows to be married, but widows should have the right to marry if they like to do so. (1)

As a picture of domestic and social life in Bengal in the last century this novel has considerable importance. It is not a romantic picture of society which existed long ago. Rather, it is a realistic description of life in the times in which Bańkimcandra lived. The description of Nagendra's ancestral house was based on Bańkimcandra's personal knowledge. (2) Nagendra is a typical wealthy man of those days. His sister Kamal was a modernised young lady living in the metropolis. The pleasant relation that existed between Kamal and Sūryamukhī is one of the happiest features of Bengali family life. In

(1) Sāmya.

(2) Bańkim Jībanī, p. 441.

Satīś, Kamal's son, Baṅkimcandra has given a happy glimpse of childlife. (1)

Nagendra's friend Haradeb had a philosophic vein. His ideas about love are extremely edifying. (2) Haradeb is never actually brought before the readers. He remains in the background as a personification of a sincere friend, a faithful confidant and a wellread man to whom one could turn in hours of distress. Though Haradeb remains aloof from the main incidents of the novel, the impression that one gathers of him is that of a fascinating person, the like of whom there are not many in the novels of Baṅkimcandra. In his novels though he has idealised many pictures of friendship between women, most of his men characters are left without any friend of their own sex to whom they can open their hearts. Himself singularly fortunate in his friends, Baṅkimcandra denied to most of the men in his novels the pleasures of real friendship.

Debendra Datta called himself a social reformer. He founded a Brahma Samaj at Debipur where

(1) Biṣabṛkṣa, Ch. XIII.

(2) Ibid - Ch. XXXII. Haradeb's letters are supposed to have been written by Baṅkimcandra's friend Jagadīśnāth Rāy - Baṅkim Jibani, 3rd Edition, p. 275.

speechmaking was the chief business. It does not seem likely that Bankimcandra intended to cast any aspersion on the Brahma Samaj. Debendra was interested in female education and the emancipation of women. But his conception of freedom for them meant seducing them and leaving them to take care of themselves. Debendra Datta would have been a better man if he had been happy in married life. Many Bengali couples are illmatched and untold misery follows.

Tarācaran, the village schoolmaster, is an overdrawn picture. He had read Addison and Goldsmith and three books of Euclid. He had a smattering of English education and was a regular member of Debendra's Brahma Samaj, where he used to read articles written for him by the village pandit or copied from current periodicals.

R. W. Frazer suggests that Bankimcandra "hemmed in his characters with a surrounding of Eastern mysticism". Frazer stretches his imagination so far as to find in Nagendra's love for Kunda "the fettering of the soul by the objects of sense" and in his love for Sūryamukhī "the mystic love of the soul for God". (1) It is perfectly

(1) Literary History of India, p. 427

clear that Bankimcandra was not weaving a net of mysticism in this novel, but was describing life as he saw it and as he knew it, for there is nothing vague or symbolical in the atmosphere of Bisabrksa.

CHAPTER VIII

I N D I R Ā.

P L O T.

Indirā, a Bengali girl, daughter of Haramohan Datta of Maheśpur was going from her father's to her husband's house and at a lonely place on the way she and her attendants were attacked by a gang of robbers. All her companions fled and she sought shelter in a Brāhmaṇ's house. Unable to return either to her father or her husband as she could not get any reliable escort, she came to Calcutta where she had some relatives. When she could not find out their address, she entered the service of Rāmrām Datta as a cook. Rāmrām's daughter-in-law Subhāsinī became very fond of Indirā and gradually came to know her real history. Subhāsinī's husband Raman Babu was a lawyer and had many clients. One of them, who came to dine with Raman Babu was recognised by Indirā as her husband Upendra. After consulation with Subhāsinī, Indirā made an appointment with Upendra, who however did not recognise his wife. He thought her to be Kumudinī, a cook in Rāmrām's house. Upendra had fallen in love with Indirā and she left Subhāsinī's house and lived with him. Ultimately he decided to take her to his own house. Indirā came to Maheśpur under some

pretext, went to her father's house and explained to her parents everything. When Upendra came there he found out that Kumudinī was none other than his own wife Indirā and he was satisfied with her explanation of the ruse she had adopted in order to be reunited to him.

Indirā was published in 1873. The novel in its later form differs from the original Indira which was in eight chapters only. In the fifth edition while the main plot remained the same the characters and incidents were considerably changed. One of the noticeable features of this novel is the method of narrating the story in the first person, a method which Bankimcandra has not often followed. This auto-biographical method had been adopted by Daniel Defoe in Robinson Crusoe and Charles Dickens in David Copperfield. In Bengali Saratcandra Cattopādhyāy followed the same method in Srikānta.

Indirā is purely a domestic novel and throughout it runs a spirit of joyousness. The first thing that strikes one in this work is the author's keen insight into the nature of woman and her inner feelings. The analysis of Indirā's emotions on her way to meet her husband is an excellent pyschological study. (1) Although at first sight this novel does not seem to offer any problem, there is in it the problem of the woman, who after falling into the hands of robbers, loses her home and her status in

(1) Indirā, Ch. III.

society. Bankimcandra could think of no other way of reuniting Indirā to her husband than by this certainly undignified stratagem. There are instances of similar nature in other Bengali novels of a later date. In Rabīndranāth's NAUKĀDUBI, Kamalā, the wife of Nalinakṣa, first came to live in the same house as a help to his aged mother. In Saratcandra's ŚRĪKĀNTA, Annadā secretly left the protection of her parents to live with her husband who had become a Muhammadan, while people thought that she had done so in order to lead a life of shame.

There are faithful pictures of Bengali life in the description of Subhāsinī's house and she herself is a personification of goodness and large hearted sympathy. Indirā's sister, Kāminī, is a typical Bengali sister-in-law whose main business is to tease her brother-in-law with all kinds of practical jokes. Rabīndranāth has two sisters (in Cirakumar Sabhā) who always are exchanging witticisms with their brother-in-law. The Brāhman woman who worked as a cook in Subhāsinī's house, Subhāsinī's mother-in-law and other characters in this novel, are examples of Bankimcandra's humour at its best. The women's gathering at Maheśpur is an instance of a purely feminine function marked by humour

so broad that the novel would have been none the worse for its omission. A mirthful incident was the appearance of a woman dressed as a Mughul among the ladies. (1) The idea of disguise which Bankimcandra introduces here was a common device with him. Bimalā dressed herself as a dancer to kill Katalu Khān. (2) Mati Bibi dressed herself as a Brahman young man. (3) Debendra Datta disguised himself as a Vaiṣṇavī. (4) In Ānandamaṭh there are several instances of disguise. Gangārām in Sītārām served the Muslims in disguise. In Candraśekhar, Sundarī dressed herself as a barber-woman to find out Śaibalinī. (5) Foster joined the service of Dyce Sombre as John Stalcart. (6) Hemcandra introduced himself at Mathurā as Ratnadās after his secret marraige with Mṛṇālinī. (7) Darīā in Rājsiṁha

(1) Indirā, Ch. XXI.

(2) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. II, Ch. XVI.

(3) Kapālkuṇḍalā, Pt. IV, Ch. VII.

(4) Biṣabṛkṣa, Ch. IX.

(5) Candraśekhar, Pt. I, Ch. IV.

(6) Ibid - Pt. VI, Ch. IV.

(7) Mṛṇālinī, Pt. IV, Ch. XI.

danced before the Mughuls as Meherjān. (1) Māṇiklāl got into the Mughul army in the clothes of a Mughul soldier. (2) Mabārak disguised himself as a merchant so that nobody might think that he was alive. (3)

The most vivacious of Bankimcandra's heroines, Indirā is a girl with buoyancy of spirit and plenty of sound commonsense. She may be a bit outspoken, a bit too free and frank, unreserved and openhearted, but these things only add to her charm. Though she is different from Bhāratī in Śaratcandra's PATHER DĀBĪ or the sisters of Amit in Rabīndranāth's SEṢER KABITĀ, either in education or social status, still in youthful optimism they are similar. Indirā does not seem to have any respect for the opposite sex. In fact she ridicules men. She thinks that the intelligence of men reaches its climax with success in college examinations or earning money in the legal profession and they would be the last persons to understand her. Moreover they had views far different from hers. Men advocated the remarriage of widows, the marriage of girls at an advanced age, the

(1) Rājsiṁha, Pt. III, Ch. VIII.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. Ix, X.

(3) Ibid - Pt. VII, Ch. IV.

education of women all of which of course she disliked. Bankimcandra was expressing through Indirā what the average Bengali woman of his days thought about the liberal views of men. (1)

Indirā regarded the house of her husband as the garden of Heaven, where the cuckoo sung every day, the south wind blew in winter and the full moon shone throughout the whole year. Her dream was realised when she was reunited to her husband. All the wealth of Haramohan Datta could not make her happy, but her acknowledged position as Upendra's wife made the world look brighter and more cheerful for her. As she passes out of the story on the way to her husband's house, musing on her happiness found at last, she leaves behind her the impression of a loving wife, rich in her husband's love and proud of her place by his side.

(1) Indirā, Ch. XVI.

CHAPTER IX

YUGALĀNGURĪYA AND RĀDHĀRĀṆĪ.

YUGALĀNGURĪYA.

(P L O T)

Hiraṇmayī, daughter of Dhanadās, a merchant of Tāmralipta, had been in love since her girlhood with Purandar, son of a wealthy man of the same city. Their marriage was arranged but one day her father cancelled the engagement. Purandar in great disappointment left for Ceylon. Some years afterwards Dhanadās married his daughter to a young man at Benares as instructed by his preceptor Ānandāsvāmī. As the time of the wedding the eyes of the bride and the bridegroom were blindfolded so that they did not see each other. The bridegroom was Purandar but he did not know who the bride was. Two rings were given to them so that they might know each other when the due time came. Before a certain period of time was over they were not to meet. Hiraṇmayī was reduced to penurious circumstances after her father's death. Still she retained her love for Purandar. King Madan Deb, who knew of this marriage, cleverly managed to bring about the reunion of

Purandar and Hiraṇmayī, after Purandar's return from Ceylon. He knew the reason why they were separated from each other and what impediments stood in the way of their living together. A portion of a letter which Hiraṇmayī had and another portion, which was in the King's possession, revealed the whole secret about the marriage and happiness came at last to Purander and Hiraṇmayī.

RĀDHĀRĀṆĪ.

P L O T.

An eleven year old girl, Rādhārāṇī went to sell a garland of flowers on the day of the car-festival. As she was returning home without selling it, a young man purchased it by paying more than its price. From a currency note given to her by him, Rādhārāṇī came to know that this young man's name was Rukmiṇīkumār. Rādhārāṇī came of a well-to-do family, but at the time the story opens she and her mother were in poverty. When she had won the lawsuits over her property, she and her mother began to live in the house of Kāmākhyā Bābu, her lawyer. After her mother's death when she was of marriageable age, she told her friend Basantakumārī that she wanted to marry Rukmiṇīkumār. Advertisements were inserted in newspapers enquiring as to the whereabouts of Rukmiṇīkumār, but to no effect. Rādhārāṇī founded an orphanage giving it the name of Rukmiṇīkumār. When she was nineteen, a gentleman came to see her with a letter from Basanta and in course of the conversation, it

transpired that this gentleman was Rukminīkumār alias Debendranārāyan Rāy, a rich man. Rādhārānī also disclosed her identity. As there were no obstacles in the way of their marriage it was arranged for.

Yugalāngurīya and Rādhārāṇī were published in 1874 and 1875 respectively. In the former, Bańkimcandra presented a picture of Bengal, when the province had commercial and maritime relations with lands far and near. The scene is laid in Tāmralipti (or Tāmralipta, modern Tamluk in Midnapore district), which was an important port in ancient days. (1) Early in the fifth century A.D., Fa Hian, the Chinese traveller, spent two years at this place and travelled from this port to Ceylon by the sea-route. Hiuan Tsang noticed it as an important harbour, having ten Buddhist monasteries with one thousand monks and an Asoka tope. (2) Bańkimcandra once visited the place in 1860 when his brother Śyāmācaraṇ was there and writing many years after, he remembered the sea of which he had glimpses at Tamluk. (3) The grandeur and beauty of the sea had once already been described by him in Kapālkuṇḍalā and

(1) Cunningham-Ancient Geography of India, p. 504.

(2) Watters - On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, Vol. II, pp. 189-90; Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVII, p. 329.

(3) Bańkim Jībanī, 3rd Edition, p. 304.

Yugalāngurīya confirms the view that Bańkimcandra retained his early love for the sea.

The main theme of both these stories is the troubled course of true love. The belief in astrological calculations is predominant in Yugālangurīya, while nothing like that finds a place in Rādhārāṇī. Hiraṇmayī and Rādhārāṇī are both examples of love which growing early in life does not wane with circumstances. Even when King Madan Deb held before her attractions of wealth, Hiraṇmayī regarded herself as Purandar's wife. In Rādhārāṇī, Bańkimcandra introduced a heroine ~~from modern Bengali life~~ who chose her own husband. Her conversation with Rukmiṇīkumār was nothing like that of the bashful Bengali girl. It was pure courtship in a new style. A Bengali girl in Bańkimcandra's days seldom arranged her own marriage. Rādhārāṇī ~~fore~~ foreshadowed some of the more modernised heroines in Bengali fiction like Bijayā in Śaratcandra's Dattā or Lalitā in Rabīndranāth's Gorā. She is an outcome of the new influences that were at work upon society. There is no moral, social or political theory in either of these novels. They prove that social conditions do not stand as barriers

in the way of romantic attachments and as lovers the ancients and the moderns are the same.

CHAPTER X

CANDRASEKHAR.

P L O T.

Pratāp Rāy and Śaibalinī had loved each other since their childhood. When they found out that their marriage was barred by relationship, they swam to the middle of the Ganges to die. Śaibalinī was afraid of death and came back. Pratāp was rescued by a Brāhman scholar named Candraśekhar who evontually married Śaibalinī. Pratāp married a girl named Rupasī and went to live at Monghyr. Śaibalinī could not forget Pratāp. Foster, an Englishman, was enamoured of Śaibalinī's beauty and kidnapped her. The Nawab Mīr Kāsim was at that time ruler of Bengal. Trouble was brewing between him and the English and it was supposed that his general Gurgan Khān was waiting for this opportunity to supplant his master.

Dalanī Begam, one of the wives of Mīr Kāsim, became anxious over the impending war between her husband and the English. In reality, she was the sister of Gurgan Khān, but nobody else knew anything about their relationship. She met him one night to dissuade him from precipitating the fight. But Gurgan's inordinate ambition clashed with Dalanī's interests and he ordered that she and her maid

Kulsam were not to be allowed to re-enter the fort. Candraśekhar accidently found them in a helpless state and conducted them to Pratāp's residence. On the same night Pratāp had rescued Śaibalinī from Foster's boat and brought her to his house. Acting on some secret information the English attacked Pratap's house, captured him and carried away Dalanī under the impression that she was Śaibalinī. In the meantime Candraśekhar had written to Mīr Kāsim that Dalanī was in Pratāp's house under his protection. The Nawab's messengers escorted Śaibalinī as they thought her to be the Begam and as she also did not protest. With the Nawab's permission Śaibalinī who posed as Pratāp's wife followed him and rescued him from the boat of the English as she still loved him. Pratāp asked Śaibalinī to forget him. She then took shelter on a hill and after passing through mental and physical agony was forgiven by her husband.

Dalanī was not found in spite of the Nawab's efforts. She had been left in a lonely place by the English. Candraśekhar's preceptor Rāmānanda Svāmī found her there and sent her to the Nawab's general, Taki Khān, who falsely informed the Nawab that the Begam was not

faithful to him. The irate Nawab ordered her death by poison. The brave girl smilingly drank poison as desired by her husband. Pratāp had already joined the army of the the Nawab. Kulsam in open court accused Taki Khān of having brought about her mistress's death. When the Nawab came to know of Dalanī's innocence, he killed Taki Khān with his own sword. Just before the final struggle between the English and the Nawab's forces, Pratāp met Saibalinī, who told him that so long as he lived she would not be happy. The large-hearted Pratāp died in the battlefield after performing daring feats of heroism.

Candrasekhar was published in 1875. Contemporary opinion was not favourable to this novel. The Calcutta Review wrote, "The present work, we confess, is to a certain extent disappointing. We miss in it the graphic character-painting, the rich and vivid description, the deep pathos which the author has taught us to expect in his writings." (1) The Calcutta Review certainly underestimated the merit of Candrasekhar, which is, as will be shown later, lacking neither in character-painting nor in pathos. If exception could be taken to anything in it, it might be to some statements of Bankimcandra which have an air of offensiveness about them. Bankimcandra might have really been blamed for saying that the ancestors of many of the landholders in Bengal were mere freebooters, (2) and the Mahamadan Khānsāmā of the English was the lowest type of human being. (3) Even though it be admitted that the first opinion has some truth in it, this aggressive way of stating it is at least

(1) 1875, pp. XI-XIII.

(2) Candrasekhar, Pt. IV, Ch. I.

(3) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. V.

lacking in tact, while the second statement is too sweeping a judgment.

The whole tone of this novel tends to the view that there is a curse resting on early love. Several types of love have been treated in this novel. There is the quiet and unassuming love of Dalanī, who prized the love of the Nawab above everything else. In girlish modesty and simplicity Dalanī reminds one of Amy Robsart in Scott's "Kenilworth". She sacrificed her life when she heard that the Nawab had ordered her death. Mīr Kāsim looked upon Dalanī as one of his many posessions. "Alas in this world power is like this!", commented Bankimcandra when the monarch grovelled in the dust for his lost love. (1)

The roots of Pratāp and Śaibalinī's love were very deep. He had other occupations and activities in life and could repress his feelings, but

(1) Candraśekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. III.

Śaibalinī regarded that love as everything in her life. Pratāp's love for Śaibalinī was no guilty love of the flesh. It meant self sacrifice for the object of his love. The words of dying Pratāp to Rāmānanda Svāmī prove with what intensity and what sincerity he loved Śaibalinī and how disinterested, noble and pure that love was. He felt that not only must he die for the sake of Śaibalinī's happiness, but he must not be ungrateful to Candraśekhar, who was his benefactor. Rāmānanda Svāmī said to Pratāp, "If there is merit in controlling the senses, then eternal heaven is yours. If one can go to heaven by doing good to others, then you deserve heaven more than Dadhīci." (1) Śaibalinī's love was like a storm and it raged as a tempest. She staked everything for Pratāp's sake - her home, her honour as a married woman, even her pride. She regarded herself and Pratāp as two flowers blooming on the same stalk in a garden, but torn asunder through evil fate. (2)

Candraśekhar was a Brāhman and a scholar in the truest sense. The significance of his character

(1) Candraśekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. VIII.

(2) Ibid - Pt. VI, Ch. VI.

lies in the fact that Bankimcandra wanted to hold forth the ideal of a life dedicated to learning, a life of plain living and high thinking, without avarice and without any consideration for material gains. Even the Nawab had a high opinion of Candraśekhar's knowledge of astrology.(1) Candraśekhar's love was as deep as his learning. He loved Śaibalinī with infinite tenderness. But she never understood him. After her abduction he burnt all his favourite books. But he could not burn the book of his heart. She remained there permanently.

Bankimcandra struck a note of perplexity in this novel regarding the nature of woman. She appeared as an enigma to him. Describing the Bhīmā tank he wrote, "Water is restless. The heart of these world-enchantresses is also restless. Water receives no impression on it. Does the heart of woman receive any?" (2) Rāmānanda Svāmī said, "I have studied all the scriptures for such a long time. I have not been able to read the mind of this girl.... Is there no bottom to this sea?" (3) Śaibalinī said to Pratāp, "The mind of woman is extremely unreliable." (4)

(1) Candraśekhar, Pt. I, Ch. I, V.
(2) Ibid - Pt. I. Ch. II.
(3) Ibid - Pt. VI. Ch. VIII. Cf. Tagore - The Golden Boat, p. 70 (The Trophy of Victory)
(4) Ibid - Pt. VI. Ch. VIII.

Yet in the same novel Bańkimcandra wrote, "In this world so like a sea woman is like a boat,", (1) and, "Women are the jewels of this world." (2) It was not due to any lack of sympathy for women that Bańkimcandra seemed to be perplexed. It was merely the everlasting problem facing the male sex, its inability to understand the mind of woman thoroughly.

We may now inquire how far the depiction of some of the historical characters in this novel is in consonance with real history. A connected history of Bengal did not exist in the days of Bańkimcandra and does not exist even now. For some of the historical episodes referred to in Candraśekhar, the author was indebted to an English translation of Syed Gholam Hossein Khan's Persian work Seir Mutaqharin and Bańkimcandra was of opinion that this translation ought to be reprinted.

Gurgan or Ḳurghin Khān was an Armenian general of Mīr Kāsim and was in charge of the Nawab's artillery. (3) The author of Seir has found fault with Ḳurghin Khān again

(1) Candraśekhar, Pt. I, Ch. VII.

(2) Ibid - Pt. VI, Ch. V.

(3) Seir Mutaqharin, Vol. II, p. 185.

and again. The translator of Seir comments, "The author, who everywhere inveighs against that general, did not know, or did not mind, that he was as much a man of genius, as Mahmed-taky-ghan, but with more knowledge." (1) He says again, "What are we to think of a seller of cloth by the yard, who conceives and executes the scheme of disciplining troops in the European manner, of making better cannon, and better muskets than the English themselves, of casting, mounting, and training an artillery, nearly equal to theirs; of introducing order, subordination, and discipline, among people totally strangers to them? .....nothing was wanting to that man to render him capable of shining, even in Europe, but education; he owed everything to his own genius, and nothing to art, or cultivation." (2)

Bankimcandra gives a slight hint that Qurghin turned a traitor to the Nawab. (3) It is probable that he has done less than justice to Qurghin Khān.

Bankimcandra was not fair to Taki Khān either. The Seir says, "This officer had the qualities of a

(1) Seir Mutaqharin, Vol. II, p. 186.

(2) Ibid - Vol. II, pp. 279-80.

(3) Candrasekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. III.

Commander in Chief, and did richly deserve that high employment; much better at least, than such a cloth-seller by the yard, as was Gurghin-qhan.....His conduct and name have been inscribed on the leaves of the historical page." (1) Taki Khān died fighting in the battle of Katwa and was not killed for treachery as Bańkimcandra says. (2) He was not such a bad man as he has been depicted in Candraśekhar. (3) One historian thinks that Bańkimcandra cannot escape blame for distorting Taki Khān's character and for taking too much liberty with history. (4) Such a charge has been levelled against novelists like Scott, but novelists have their defender also. Butterfield says, ".....the historical novelist owes a certain loyalty to the history of which he treats. But because this is a marriage of the arts it is not a complete loyalty." (5)

(1) Seir Mutaqharin, Vol. II, p. 186.

(2) Ibid - p. 255, pp. 258-59.

(3) Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 388 (Footnote).

(4) K.P. Bandyopādhyāy-Bāṅglār Itihās Nabābī Āmal, p. 417.

(5) The Historical Novel, p. 6.

With regard to Ali Ibrāhīm Khān, Bankimcandra has been true to history. Mīr Kāsim regarded Ali Ibrāhīm as a great friend. (1) A translator of Riyazu-s-salatin refers to him as the "old, brave and loyal officer, Ali Ibrahim Khan, who clung to his old master with a fidelity uncommon in those treacherous days." (2)

In Candrasekhar, Bankimcandra paid a high tribute to British character. If he depicted one Lawrence Foster, he made ample amends by his expressed admiration for the British in other places of this novel. Amyatt, the head of the English factory at Patna says, "On the day that an Englishman decamps in fear of the inhabitants of this country, the hope of the foundation of British rule in India will disappear." Bankimcandra appreciated the British sense of duty and spirit of fearlessness. Amyatt died like a Briton fighting to the last and said before his death, "If we die here today, a fire will be kindled in Hindusthan which will reduce to ashes the Muhammadan empire. If this field be drenched with our blood, the royal flag of George III will easily

(1) Candrasekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. III.

(2) Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 392. (Footnote).

be planted on it." (1) Bankimcandra defended the character of Warren Hastings. An empire-builder like him could not be narrow-minded and mean. (2) Even Foster is not without some of the salient qualities belonging to his race. He says, "I shall die like an Englishman," "The Englishman never lies". (3) These passages may be set over against the charge against Bankimcandra that he entertained anti-British feelings. (4) A novelist who could write in such glowing terms of the British and especially in a novel which shows them at war with the power then ruling in Bengal should be the last person to be accused of sentiments which might in any way be said to be antagonistic or hostile to the British.

(1) Camdrasekhar, Pt. V, Ch. I.

(2) Candrasekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. IV.

(3) Ibid - Pt. VI, Ch. VII.

(4) Bangabani, Bhadra, 1330 B.Y., p. 71.

CHAPTER XI

RAJANĪ.

P L O T.

Rajanī, a blind girl and heiress to a large property, which was being enjoyed by Rāmsaday Mitra, was the adopted daughter of Rājcandra Dās, a flower-seller. She used to go with her flowers to the house of Rāmsaday and Rāmsaday's wife Labaṅgalatā became very fond of her. Rajanī fell in love with Sacīndra, Rāmsday's son by a former wife, but nodoby knew anything of it. Labaṅga wanted to get Rajanī married to a Kulīn, Gopāl Basu, who had already a wife named Cāpā. Rajanī was averse to this marriage and ran away with Cāpā's brother Hīrālāl, who left her in a lonely place on the river when she refused his proposal of marriage. The poor girl jumped into the Ganges to end her life. She was rescued by a young man named Amarnāth, who had at one time desired to marry Labaṅga. Since Labaṅga's marriage Amarnāth had once been to Benares where he heard the story of Rajanī told him by a chance acquaintance. Amarnāth had come to know that this girl's name was Rajanī. After he had rescued her, he decided to help Rajanī to recover the property

and marry her. Rajanī consented out of gratitude though she still loved Śacīndra. Although claims to the property were given up by the Mitras, it was not taken possession of by Rajanī. Labaṅga realised that the only way of retaining the property so that the whole family might be saved from starvation, would be to try to make her stepson Śacīndra fall in love with Rajanī. She succeeded in doing this with the help of a sannyasi. But Rajanī would not be ungrateful to Amarnāth. Labaṅga then requested Amarnāth to sacrifice his happiness for her sake, which he gladly consented to. He made over his own property to Rajanī and Śacīndra and left for Kashmir. Rajanī gained her eyesight by means of the treatment of a sannyasi after her marriage with Śacīndra.

Rajanī which first appeared in Bańgadarśan was published in 1877. It is useful to note here that between the first version and some of the subsequent editions of Bańkimcandra's novels there are considerable differences. Rajanī is a case in point. So much of the original serial was changed in the first edition that appeared in book-form that it may be said to be a new work. Bańkimcandra adopted the plan followed by Wilkie Collins in "The Woman in White", of letting each character tell his or her story. Browning followed the same plan in "The Ring and the Book" and Rabīndranāth has done so in his novel "Ghare Bāire" (The Home and the World).

The character of Rajanī was based on Nydia, the blind flower-girl in Lytton's Last Days of Pompeii. Rajanī was an intelligent girl and there is an element of humour in her nature. Hearing that the Monument in Calcutta was a grand edifice she accepted it as her husband.(1) From the moment Śacīndra touched her hands accidently she felt a deep love for him. No one understood her. She knew that this love of hers was tormenting. She felt that

(1) Rajanī, Pt. I, Ch. I.

a woman was not beautiful without her eyes. Her one great desire was to see for a moment at least what exactly she was like, what Sacīndra was like and how the rest of the world looked. (1) Again and again she proved the nobility of her heart and at last she was blessed by her union with her beloved.

Amarnāth loved Labangalatā when he was very young. He was broken-hearted since her marriage. The story shows his disinterested service to others. He was a scholar wellread in Eastern and Western literature and history. (2) When he learnt that Rajanī loved Sacīndra he did not stand in the way of her happiness. He mused, "Sacīndra is Rajanī's, Rajanī belongs to Sacīndra. Who am I to stand between them?" and he was determined to make them happy. (3) Labangalatā said to him, "You are extraordinary. Forgive me, I never knew your good qualities." (4) She had branded him as a thief for one act of folly in his youth. (5) His love had not found any

(1) Rajanī, Pt. I, Ch. III.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. III.

(3) Ibid - Pt. V, Ch. I.

(4) Ibid - Pt. V. Ch. III.

(5) Ibid - Pt. IV. Ch. IV.

return, but he was ready to do anything for Labanga's happiness. Amarnāth's love was entirely selfless. Like Pratāp he also had loved and lost. Saibalinī reciprocated Pratāp's love and Pratāp knew it. But Amarnāth drifted aimlessly along with the stream of life.

Labaṅgalatā was happy in spite of her marriage with a fairly aged man. Witty, sprightly and cheerful, her smiles had a peculiar charm. Of the male sex she cherished no high opinion, but she found out that there was a limit to woman's intelligence..(1) She told Amarnāth that nobody except her husband could expect anything akin to love from her even if he were as great as the god Mahādeb. In Labaṅga's tender heart there was a soft corner for Amarnāth though she would not openly admit it. Otherwise why did she suddenly stop and why did tears choke her voice? Her pride must have prompted her to boast but the next moment her feelings got the better of her. (2)

To Sachīndra Rajanī's beauty made no physical appeal. He did not at first even know that she loved him. She did not conform to his conception of an ideal wife. (3)

(1) Rajanī, Pt. IV. Ch. VII.

(2) Ibid - Pt. V. Ch. III.

(3) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. II.

This may be a fling by Bańkimcandra at the taste of contemporary young men who were fastidious in matrimonial matters. During his illness Śacīndra saw Rajanī in dreams and fell in love with her. It seems somewhat crude that a Tāntrik ceremony by a Sannyasi was at the root of Śacīndra's love. (1) This seems to be one of the belmishes in the novel. But Bańkimcandra believed in supernatural things and that partly justifies his use of the sannyasi.

In this novel once more Bańkimcandra shows his disapproval of Kulīnism and vices like drinking. In the character of Hīrālāl, a thorough rascal, Bańkimcandra caricatured contemporary pseudo-dramatists and contributors to periodicals. Śaścandra Caṭṭopādhyāy thinks that Hīrālāl is a caricature of a newspaper editor who had once maligned Bańkimcandra. (2) Hīrālāl is a type of the tall-talker and humbug, who with little education poses as a great social reformer and thinks drinking wine and writing indecent articles signs of progress.

Bańkimcandra was rather careful about hurting

(1) Rajanī, Pt. IV, Ch. VII, Cf. Last Days of Pompeii, BK. IV, Ch. V, Nydia's love "philtre" and its effects on Glaucus.

(2) Bańkim Kāhinī (in Jībanī), p. 57.

social susceptibilities. Hence he makes Sacīndra after his marriage with Rajanī leave Calcutta and live elsewhere lest people should whisper anything about his wife's former occupation as a flower-girl. It does not seem that Bańkimcandra was conservative in outlook but a rather zealous carefulness to avoid anything of a controversial nature in his novels prevented him from giving a straight-forward opinion on many topics of the day. This seems pretty obvious from what Amarnāth says about widow remarriage, abolition of the caste system, raising the age of marriage, intercaste dining, intercaste marriage, and emancipation of women. (1) Bańkimcandra passed off as Amarnāth's opinion what views the average man with conservative ideas in his days cherished on important matters affecting life and society in Bengal.

It would be interesting to note what Bańkimcandra says in this novel about beauty. He writes, "Beauty is distorted by the eyes with which we see it. That really is beautiful in the enjoyment of which the senses create no change in the mind." (2) In Bibidha Prabandha he says, "The enjoyment of beauty is a pleasure of the mind only, it has no

(1) Rajanī, Pt. II, Ch. IV.

(2) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. I.

relation to the senses ..... The pleasure which beauty affords is different from the satisfaction of the senses." (1) Bankimcandra's attitude to beauty was that of a man of intellect rather than that of a man of emotions.

Rajanī is a novel without any purpose. Much of the charm of a novel is lost if it is full of something to which the novelist is constantly focussing his attention and upon which he lavishes more care than he does upon the development of the plot or the delineation of the characters. In Rajanī one does not meet with extraordinary characters or a variety of wonderful incidents. One has to be content with a story of the every-day world, of daily life, of ordinary men, women and events. Rajanī has a distinct value as the first pyschological novel in Bengali. It analyses the feelings that rise in the minds of its characters, but it contains no laborious or tedious dissectionof emotions and thoughts.

(1) Collected Works, Vol. I. p. 794.

C H A P T E R XII

KRSNAKĀNTER UIL.

P L O T.

After Kṛṣṇakānta Rāy, zamidar of Haridragram, had made his will, his son Haralāl objected to his cousin Gobindalāl getting half the share of the property and threatened his father that he would marry a widow unless the will was changed. Kṛṣṇakānta then made another will depriving Haralāl of a large part of his share. Haralāl bribed Brahmānanda, the clerk, who had drawn up the will for Kṛṣṇakānta to forge another, the contents of which would be in his favour. Brahmānanda's widowed niece Rohiṇī promised to put this will in Kṛṣṇakānta's drawer and get the other one on the understanding that Haralāl would marry her. When she had done it, he refused to marry her and Rohiṇī would not let him have the other will she had stolen. One night she went to replace the genuine will in Kṛṣṇakānta's room as she was afraid of the secret coming out some day, but was caught in the act. She was not severly dealt with as Gobindalāl interceded for her. Rohiṇī had fallen in love with him but he had a wife. She tried to dwown herself but Gobindalāl saved her life. Rohiṇī's beauty cast a spell over his mind

and he left home to forget her. Gradually the scandal about him and Rohiṇī reached the ears of his wife Bhramar. Gobindalāl on his return found that Bhramar had gone away to her father's place without waiting for him. Kṛṣṇakānta became seriously ill and Bhramar returned. Before his death Kṛṣṇakānta changed his will and made Bhramar his heiress. Gobindalāl left for Benares thinking it undignified to live on his wife's money. Soon he vanished and Rohiṇī also left the village. Bhramar became heart-broken and fell ill. Her father Mādhabīnāth found out that Gobindalāl and Rohiṇī were living together at Prasadpur. He went there with his friend Niśākar, who was a handsome man. Niśākar entered Gobindalāl's residence on the pretext of meeting him and arranged a tryst with Rohiṇī outside. Gobindalāl followed her and killed her as a faithless woman. He was arrested but escaped punishment through his father-in-law's influence. Bhramar was dying slowly. Just before her death, Gobindalāl came to see her and then left for some unknown destination.

Krsnakānter Uil was published in 1878. In the first edition of the novel Gobindalāl was drowned one morning in the Bārunī tank. The episode was subsequently rewritten by Bankimcandra.

Gobindalāl was a man of high and noble character at first. His way of thinking was, "Everything is beautiful, it is only unkindness that is ugly. Nature is kind, but man alone is unkind." (1) The desire in his heart for Rohinī arose in a moment of weakness. It was a desire for novelty. Old Krsnakānta shrewdly guessed that his nephew's head had been turned by Rohinī's beauty. From that time a change came over Gobindalāl. Here was a woman more beautiful than his wife. He must have derived some inward pleasure from the thought that such a woman loved him. The misunderstanding between him and his wife partly contributed to his moral downfall. If he had but once asked for his wife's forgiveness he might have been happy, but his pride, his shame, his sin, stood in the way of his happiness. Still all the fault was not his. Bhramar's attitude towards him aggravated matters. She took a strong stand and so neither

(1) Krsnakānter Uil, Pt. I. Ch. VII.

of them had the chance of an explanation which would have led to a reconciliation. It was too late when he understood that beauty could not supply the void place of love.

Bhramar is introduced to us as a happy wife. She had absolute faith in her husband but when she found that there were reasons to think of him otherwise she wrote to him plainly, "So long as you were worthy of respect, I was devoted to you; so long as you were worthy of trust, I had faith in you. But now I am no longer devoted to you, no longer do I believe you, I have no further pleasure in seeing you." (1) It was not that she ceased to love him, but she placed virtue above her husband. He had taught her the greatness of truth and when he was no longer true to his wife, he could not expect her to have respect for him. Bhramar was not the typical Hindu wife obedient to her husband under all circumstances. Her character is a protest against the conventional idea that the husband's will is always to be obeyed. (2) More

(1) Kṛṣnakānter Uil, Pt. I, Ch. XXIII.

(2) Cf. Rabīndranāth - Strīr Patra.

submission to the will of her husband would have brought Bhramar happiness, but the charm of her character would have been impaired in that case. Bhramar could never for a moment forget that her husband was a murderer. The blood of Rohiṇī stood between her and her husband. They met just before her death and Gobindalāl understood that happiness had slipped out of his hands through his own folly.

The pivot of Rohiṇī's character was her insatiable desire. The position of a widow was a problem in Bengali society in Bankimcandra's days and still is. In Rohiṇi's musings the most prominent note was that the infinite beauty of life has not been enjoyed.(1) The keynote to her character is that she was jealous of the happiness of others. If she had had a husband in whose love she could be happy, she would not have grudged others their happiness. Though she longed for death day and night she had not the courage to die. The knowledge that Gobindalāl had guessed that she loved him gave her pleasure. She tried to commit suicide but chance made Gobindalāl her rescuer. From that time her desire to die decreased. Even after Gobindalāl was vanquished by her

(1) Kṛṣṇakānter Uil, Pt. I. Ch. VI.

beauty and had entered on an irregular life with her, she still craved for fresh conquests and was flattered by the suggestion that Niśākar was a victim of her charm. Rohiṇī had not the heart to face death bravely when Gobindalāl was on the point of shooting her. She reflected that she was young, she was happy according to her own ideas of happiness and she wanted to live. She did not really love him. It was a temporary infatuation and nothing else. In her death-scene there is something of a melodramatic touch. Gobindalāl's highsounding words to her and her pathetic words praying for her life, all seem very unreal and exaggerated.

Bankimcandra's knowledge of Bengali life in many of its aspects is clearly manifest in this novel. Of special interest are the descriptions of the Kāchārī or office of Kṛṣṇakānta where he gave audience to his tenants,[1] his "śrāddha" ceremony,[2] the servants gossiping among themselves,[3] and the talk of the village-women,[4] all

(1) Kṛṣṇakānter Uil, Pt. I, Ch. XI.

(2) Ibid - Pt. I, Ch. XXVIII.

(3) Ibid - Pt. I, Ch. X.

(4) Ibid - Pt. I. Ch. XXI.

of which display the novelist's intimate acquaintance with the life around him. In minor things like the description of the Bāruṇī garden, Baṅkimcandra was at his best. (1) In this description there is a personal touch. At Kāṭālpārā there was a garden near a tank, called Arjunā and it must have been in Baṅkimcandra's mind when he wrote this novel. (2) Baṅkimcandra's own fondness for tobacco is apparent from his laudation of it in Biṣabṛkṣa. (3) Kṛṣṇakānta also was fond of smoking. But he had another weakness. Under the intoxicating influence of opium he used to see strange visions. (4) In 1875 Kamalākānter Daptar - the musings of Kamalākānta Cakravartī, written by Baṅkimcandra was published, reminding one of De Quincey's "Confession of an English Opium Eater." Kṛṣṇakānta's brain under the influence of opium would be in a muddle like that of Kamalākānta, but there is absolutely no reason to suppose that Baṅkimcandra himself was fond of this drug.

(1) Kṛṣṇakānter Uil, Pt. I. Ch. VII, Ch. XV.

(2) Baṅkim Jībanī, pp. 31-32.

(3) Biṣabṛkṣa, Ch. X.

(4) Kṛṣṇakānter Uil, Pt. I. Ch. III.

Krsnakānter Uil is purely a domestic novel written with the purpose of showing Bengali family life with the larger background of social life. But it is no problem-novel like Bisabrksa. The position of the widow in Bengali society is not the subject-matter of the novel, though there is some reason for thinking that the question of the remarriage of widows was in Bańkimcandra's mind when he wrote it. A story of human passions - fierce and tender, of relations - the holiest and the most sinful that can exist between man and woman, it deals with the ruin of a noble soul, the grimmest tragedy that wrecked a happy wedded life, the gradual downfall of a generous man and it was not without reason that the author regarded Krsnakānter Uil as his best novel. (1)

(1) Bańkim Jībanī, p. 441

CHAPTER XIII

RĀJSTĪNA.

P L O T.

Cañcalkumārī, princes of Rupnagar, one day in passion, trampled under foot a picture of the Emperor Aurangzib. The news reached Delhi and the Emperor promised his wife Udipurī Begam that he would have the princess brought to his harem and that she should prepare tobacco for the Begam. He sent his general Mabārak with an army to Rupnagar to propose marriage to the princess. This Mabārak was a lover of the Emperor's daughter Zebunnisa. Aurangzib's Hindu wife Jodhpurī Begam wrote to Cañcalkumārī advising her not to come to Delhi. The Rupnagar chieftain was a feudatory and was powerless before the Emperor. On the advice of her friend Nirmakumārī, Cañcal appealed to Mahārāṇā Rājsiṁha of Udaipur for protection. The bearer of the letter was stopped on the way by robbers, but fortunately the letter reached the Mahārāṇā who was out hunting at that time. He rescued the princess from the hands of the Mughuls, who were carrying her off to Delhi and conveyed her to Udaipur. The Rupnagar chieftain on being asked by the Mahārāṇā for the hand of the princess replied that he would gladly consent if the Māhārāṇā could save him from the Emperor's wrath. Aurangzib at

this time reimposed the jazia tax on the Hindus. This was a tax upon all Hindus for permission to live and practise their religion in an Islamic state. It had been abolished by Akbar. The Mahārāṇā wrote a letter of protest against the imposition of this tax and sent it to the Emperor through a trusted soldier Māṇiklāl. The Mahārāṇā's letter incensed Aurangzib and he decided on war as he had been affronted. In the meantime Mabārak had incurred the displeasure of Zebunnisa. He was ordered to be killed, but his life was saved by Māṇiklāl with whom Mabārak came to Udaipur. After this Zebunnisa felt repentant as she really loved him. In the war with the Rājputs, the Mughuls were compelled to seek for peace after Udipurī Begam and Zebunnisa were captured by the Rājputs and all food supplies cut off. Zebunnisa met her lover with the assistance of Nirmal and they were secretly married. The Mahārāṇā set Udipurī Begam and Zebunnisa free, but only after the former had prepared tobacco for the Rupnagar princess as an astrological caculation had foretold that Cañcal would not be married unless an Empress prepared tobacco for her. Shortly afterwards Aurangzib sent another expedition against Rājsiṁha. This time Cañcal's father joined the Mahārāṇā and the Mughuls were once more defeated. Rājsiṁha and Cañcalkumārī were then married.

Rājsiṁha was published in 1882. The first edition was complete in nineteen chapters only. The fourth edition saw the novel in its present form. In a long preface Baṅkimcandra explained the reason of his enlarging the story. He considered the Mahārāṇā a great hero and felt that history had not been fair to him. It is worth noting that Baṅkimcandra regarded Rajsimha as an historical novel, in fact his first historical novel. But this was not strictly correct. Mṛṇālinī, published in 1869, was described as "aitihāsik upanyās". As he himself points out, so far as the main incidents of the novel are concerned he followed history, but in minor details he furnished his own materials. The main characters are based on history but some of the actions attributed to them are not actually historical.

By way of apology for introducing unhistorical matter into the story Baṅkimcandra wrote, "The purpose of history can sometimes be served by the novel. The novelist is not always bound by the chain of truth. According to his own wishes, for his own purposes, he can take the help of imagination. But the novel can never take the place of history .....In a novel everything need not be historical."

Rājsiṁha marks a new period in the literary career of Baṅkimcandra. Hitherto he had confined himself mostly to the history of Bengal, but this time he went to the history of the Rājputs for his materials. He was, however, not treading an absolutely unfamiliar track. Raṅgalāl's Padminī (1859), and Surasundarī (1860), Madhusūdan's Kṛṣṇakumārī (1861) and Rameścandra's Rājput Jībansandhyā (1879) had to some extent familiarised Bengali readers with stories from Rājasthān.

Baṅkimcandra followed Tod's account with regard to the demand Aurangzib made to the Chieftain of Rupnagar.(1) Recent historians doubt the accuracy of Tod's account and are inclined to think that the fighting between Aurangzib and Rājsiṁha occurred eighteen or nineteen years after the marriage of Rājsiṁha and Rupkumārī.(2) The re-imposition

(1) Tod - The Annals and Antiquities of Rajsthan, Vol. I. pp. 440-41. The same theme has furnished material for a poem in English by a Bengali poet, G. C. Dutt (Maid of Roopnagar) in "Cherry Stones" (1881) and to Gujarati and Marathi writers like Harināṛāyan Apte and Nārāyan Hemachandra.

(2) Prabāsī, Vol. XXX, Pt. I - Mahārāṇā Rājsiṁha.

of the jazia tax [1] upon the Hindus led Rajsimha to address a dignified letter to the Mughul Emperor in the name of the Hindus. This letter has a parellel in the letter that the poet Prthvīrāj of Bikanir wrote to Mahārāṇā Pratāp Simha. [2] Tod has praised the tone of dignity and sincerity that runs through this letter. [3] Some scholars, however, think that this letter was really written by Shivaji to Aurangzib. [4] But even they admit that on the revival of the jazia tax, a demand had been sent to the Mahārāṇā for its enforcement throughout his state. [5] It is beyond the scope of the present thesis to discuss who actually wrote the letter to the Mughul Emperor, but it would be quite in keeping with the Mahārāṇā's character to have done the thing Bankimcandra credited him with. According to the novel the Mahārāṇā's letter enraged

(1) Elphinstone - History of India, p. 622; J.N.Sarkar - History of Aurangzib, Vol. III, p. 305. Khafi Khan says, "With the object of curbing the infidels and of distinguishing the land of the faithful from an infidel land, the jizya or poll-tax was imposed upon the Hindus throughout all the provinces."—Lanepoole, Mediaeval India from Contemporary Sources, p. 132.

(2) R.C.Dutt - Rājput Jibansandhyā, Ch. XXVI.

(3) Annals and Antiquities of Rajsthan, Vol. I. p. 442.

(4) J.N. Sarkar - History of Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp.325-29; Modern Review, January, 1908; Vincent Smith does not accept this theory of Sarkar-Oxford History of India, p. 439.

(5) Sarkar - Aurangzib, Vol. III, p. 383.

Aurangzib to such an extent that he ordered a campaign against Mewār. The real cause of the War, however, was the protection given by the Rāṇā to the wife and children of Raja Jaswant Singh of Mārwār who was believed to have been poisoned by Aurangzib. (1) But these events are not at all referred to in this novel.

In Baṅkimcandra's opinion the invasion of Mewār could only be compared to the invasion of Greece by Xerxes. His comment is, "We commit to memory Greek history, but we know nothing of the history of Rājsiṁha. That is the benefit of modern education!" (2) His contempt for so-called history is clear from the remark he made regarding Dara's Rājput wife who committed suicide rather than become the wife of Aurangzib. (3)

The picture of the Mughul harem drawn by Baṅkimcandra is not far different from contemporary accounts of it. Tavernier whom we can regard as a trustworthy observer of things says, "It is not difficult to imagine that strange things take place in the enclosure where these women

(1) Smith-Oxford History of India, p. 438.

(2) Rājsiṁha, Pt. V. Ch. VI.

(3) The wife of Dara to whom Baṅkimcandra refers was really a Hindu dancing-girl who remained faithful to the memory of the Prince - Niccolao Manucci-Storia do Mogor, Vol. I, pp. 361-62.

and girls are shut up."(1) In spite of Aurangzib's orders music, dancing and drinking were in vogue there. (2) The Emperor's daughter Zebunnisa was unmarried, but she had many favourites. (3) She once said to her lover Mabārak, "Am I the daughter of a Hindu Brāhman or a Rājput that throughout life I should serve one husband and then die in the fire? If such had been the wish of God, He would not have made me the daughter of an Emperor." (4) To her, love meant sorrow and princesses she said were not meant to bear any sorrow in life. (5)

Bankimcandra followed Manucci and Orme in his

(1) Tavernier - Travels in India, Vol. I. p. 300. He also gives a glimpse of the Imperial harem where Heinous crimes were committed, Ibid - p.313.

(2) Lanepoole - Aurangzib, p. 101; Sarkar - Aurangzib, Vol.III, p.93 f; Bernier, p. 274 - The Kenchens or Nautch-girls were allowed to come to the ~~Amkas~~ Am-Kas to salam Aurangzib from a certain distance.

(3) F.F.Catrou - The General History of the Mogol Empire, pp. 325-31, definitely states that women in the seraglio kept gallants and enjoyed more liberty than was decent for princesses. Manucci does not say if Zebunnisa was married. J.N.Sarkar (Modern Review, January, 1916)thinks that stories about Zebunnisa's lovers were inventions of Urdu romanticists of Northern India.

(4) Rājsimha, Pt.II, Ch.III.

(5) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. VII.

description of the character of Udipurī Begam. Orme is responsible for the account of her capture by the Rajputs.(1) Manucci refers to her habit of drinking and records how on one occasion she was so drunk that she could not come to Aurangzib's presence and when he went to her apartments he found her all in disorder. (2) This incident must have been in the mind of the novelist when he speaks of Zebunnisa finding Udipurī hopelessly drunk. (3) Of course, Manucci was not a trustworthy historian and mixed his own inventions with court scandal and gossip. But the novelist creates his own characters and cannot be blamed for not sifting historical matter. Professor Saintsbury remarks, "It is constantly useful, and it may at times be indispensible, for the historical novelist to take liberties with history." (4)

Nirmalkumārī is one of the most fearless girls in Bankimcandra's novels. No amount of threatening

(1) Historical Fragments, p. 107 f; Storia do Mogor, Vol.II, p. 241. J.N. Sarkar discredits the account of Udipuri Begam's capture - Aurangzib, Vol. III, p. 431.

(2) Storia do Mogor, Vol. II, pp. 107-8.

(3) Rājsimha, Pt. II, Ch. V.

(4) Essays in English Literature, 1780-1860, Second Series, p. 342; See also the Nation, 1867, p. 126.

could make her divulge to the Emperor how she had got admission to his palace. She said, "The daughter of a Hindu is not afraid of dying in the fire. Has not the Emperor of Hindusthan heard that with a smile the daughter of a Hindu dies in burning fire with her husband? The threat that comes from you has been the lot of my mother and grandmother, who in the past have died in the fire. It is also my hope that through the grace of God I shall have a place beside my husband and be burnt alive."(1) Again she said, "Emperor, have you never heard that Hindu women practise fasting?.....Have you never heard that they starve themselves to death?" (2) The faithful wife of a poor Hindu soldier rejected all the offers of the proudest Mughul Emperor.

Bankimcandra has not been fair to Aurangzib.(3) It is doubtful if ever this stern Mughul Emperor fell in love. History speaks of his "cold austerity." (4) Whatever might have been his other faults,

(1) Rājsimha, Pt. VI, Ch. V.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Rājsimha, Pt. II, Ch. V.
(4) Lanepoole - Aurangzib, p. 87; Lanepoole - Mediaeval India, p. 359 f.

at least he was no moral weakling like some of his predecessors on the throne of Delhi. (1) Therefore when the novelist makes him indulge in sentimental language it seems like bathos. Bankimcandra spoke of Jodhpurī Begam as Aurangzib's first consort. History mentions on the other hand, Dilras Banu, Nawab Bai, Aurangabadi and Udaipuri as his wives. (2) Bankimcandra played a trick with chronology when he wrote that peace was concluded between the Mughuls and the Rājputs in Rājsimha's life-time. Peace was definitely made between Aurangzib and Rājsimha's successor Jaysimha in June, 1681, eight months after Rājsimha's death. (3)

In the women-characters of this novel there is a steadfastness of purpose and they have no hesitation in doing difficult things. Women do things in that way. (4)

(1) Mirat-i-'alam of Bakhtawar Khan praises "the excellent character, the worthy habits and the refined morals of this most virtuous monarch."—Lanepoole - Mediaeval India from Contemporary Sources, p. 120.

(2) Sarkar - Aurangzib, Vol. V. p. 476.

(3) Sarkar - Aurangzib, Vo. III, p. 430; Lanepoole - Mediaeval India, p. 386.

(4) Rabīndranath Thākur - Ādhunik Sāhitya, p. 58.

They do not think much before plunging into an adventure. Their policy is swift action, specially when something important is at stake. Men take more time to think, they weigh the pros and cons, they deliberate and think twice before jumping into the unknown. When Cañcal broke the portrait of Aurangzib into pieces she did not consider the effects. It was a mere impulse of the moment. Zebunnisa did not think seriously when she ordered Mabarak to be poisoned.

Bankimcandra made it sufficiently clear in the last chapter of his novel that it was never his intention to glorify one community by belittling another. He never believed that simply because a man was a Hindu he would be good and simply because a man was not a Hindu he would be bad. Bankimcandra has been regarded as anti-Muhammadan in sentiment. (1) That is a charge which is well refuted by Bankimcandra's own writings. But it is not impertinent on the part of the historical novelist to have some attachment for his race. An eminent critic like Brander Matthews says, "Not only is it impossible for a man to get away from his country, but it is equally impossible for him to get away from his own nationality. Has any author ever been able to create a character of a different stock from his own?

(1) The Indian World, December, 1907, pp. 525-26.

Certainly all the greatest figures of fiction are compatriots of their authors." (1) Bankimcandra's principal aim was to make Rājsiṁha more familiar to his countrymen and naturally his mind was full of sympathy for the Rājputs. His admination for Rājsiṁha must remain as his sole defence for any wilful tampering with history in this novel.

(1) The Forum, Vol. XXIV, 1897-98, p.84.

CHAPTER XIV

ĀNANDAMATH .

P L O T.

In consequence of the great famine of 1770 as a result of which parts of Bengal were depopulated and devastated, (1) Mahendra Simha, a zamindar left his home with his wife Kalyānī and daughter Sukumārī for the city. While he was searching for milk for the baby, some robbers came and captured his wife and daughter. Taking advantage of a quarrel among the robbers, Kalyānī escaped with her daughter and was succoured by a sannyasi, Satyānanda, who had organised a band of sannyasis known as "Santāns" or "Children" to free the country. The centre of their activities was known as "Ānandamaṭh". Satyānanda's chief associates were Bhabānanda, Jībānanda and Dhīrānanda. Kalyānī and her daughter came to the Maṭh and Bhabānanda was sent to find Mahendra, who in the meantime had been arrested as a robber by the sepoys. Bhabānanda rescued him from the sepoys by a trick. On his arrival at the Maṭh,

(1) Hunter - Annals of Rural Bengal, pp. 19-29; also Ibid, Appendix B; J.C.Marshman - An outline of the History of Bengal, p. 192. In a letter dated the 28th August, 1771, the Court of Directors of the East India Company commended those people who had helped to relieve the distress and expressed its indignation against those who had profiteered at that time - Hunter, p. 420.

Mahendra heard all about the creed of the Santāns and was eager to embrace it. But to meet one's wife and children after initiation into the sect was a sin. So he proposed first of all to take his wife and daughter to his village-home. On the way Sukumārī in ignorance swallowed a poison-pill and became senseless. Kalyānī also took poison thinking her daughter dead. In the midst of his grief Mahendra heard Satyānanda singing a devotional song. Some sepoys who were passing arrested Mahendra and Satyānanda as rebels. On his way to the prison Satyānanda went on singing. Jībānanda hearing the song understood from it that Sukumārī was lying in the forest and went in search of her. The poison had not killed the child and Jībānanda left her in the care of his sister Nimāimani with whom Jībānanda's wife Sānti also lived. In themeantime the Santāns after a fight had rescued Mahendra and Satyānanda. By meeting his wife Jībānanda had transgressed the rules of the order. A further complication arose when Sānti followed her husband to the Math in the guise of a young man and was initiated as a Santān. Satyānanda, however, guessed the real identity of Sānti. Bhabānanda had found Kalyānī in the forest, discovered that she was still alive and had fallen in love with her. But Kalyānī repelled his advances. In

a skirmish with the English, Bhabānanda fell fighting, though his men came out victorious. Mahendra was reunited to his wife and daughter and began to live with them at his native village. In a subsequent battle with the English, the Santāns won the day and Jībānanda fell wounded, but a mysterious great man (Mahāpurus) restored him to Santi. Śānti and Jībānanda spent the rest of their lives in the Himalayas. Satyānanda was dissuaded by the same great man from fighting any more as all hopes of Hindu supremacy were over.

Ānandamath was published in 1882. In the preface to the third edition (1885) the author among other things said, "A novel is a novel, it is not history." Referring to Ānandamath Bankimcandra wrote in the preface to Debī Caudhurānī, "It was not my intention to write an historical novel and therefore I did not pretend to be historical." He was protesting too much about history in his novels. Was this from a growing consciousness that he was not fair to actual historical matter?

The background of the novel is the sannyasi rebellion in Bengal described in the letters of Hastings as given in Gleig's Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings.(1) In the early days of British rule in Bengal anarchy and lawlessness were rampant. Famine and virulent epidemics ravaged the country. "The country was full of disorderly elements - dacoits or robbers, with whom plundering was an hereditary occupation, religious devotees called sannyasis or fakirs, who made religion a cloak for robbery and lived

(1) Vol. I, p. 282, p. 285, p. 294, pp.296-98, pp.303-04. These letters were written to various people like Sir George Colebrooke, Mr. Sykes, John Purling,Esqr., Josias Dupre, Esqr., during February and March, 1773. Hunter - Annals of Rural Bengal, pp. 70-71. In Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VII, pp.159-60 there is mention of some Sannyasi insurrections in North Bengal even in 1782 and 1785.

on the country, disbanded soldiers, and ruined peasants." (1) In one of his letters Hastings gives the following very strange and surely inaccurate account of the Sannyasis: "The history of this people is curious. They inhabit, or rather possess, the country lying south of the hills of Tibbet from Cabul to China. They go mostly naked. They have neither towns, houses, nor families, but rove continually from place to place, recruiting their numbers with the healthiest children they can steal in the countries through which they pass. Thus they are the stoutest and most active men in India. Many are merchants. They are all pilgrims, and held by all castes of Gentoos in great veneration..... They are hardy, bold, and enthusiastic to a degree surpassing credit. Such are the Sennassies, the gipsies of Hindostan." (2)

One of the grandest conceptions in this novel and as a matter of fact in the whole range of Bengali literature, is the idealisation of the country as the Mother. The song "Bande Mataram" sung by Bhabānanda is Bankimcandra's call to nationalism through literature. Bhabānanda said, "We recognise no other mother. We say, the country is the

(1) O'Malley - History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, pp. 206-07; J. M. Ghosh - Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal, pp. 50-52.

(2) G. R. Gleig - Memoirs of the Life of Hastings, Vol. I, pp. 303-04.

mother. We have no mother, no father, no brother, no wife, no home, no habitation. We have that land, well-watered, fruitful, cooled by the South Wind, green with crops." (1) The "children's" idea of the country was that of a mother, the repository of all strength, the destroyer of all enemies, one whose image filled the temples, the goddess wielding the ten weapons, the source of wealth and wisdom, the giver of beauty, flowers and moonlight. The idea of the Great Mother is nothing new in Indian thought. To many Indian devotees God is as much ~~the Supreme~~ Mother as Father since He is sexless. (2) This idea runs through all the Śākta literature of Bengal. (3) The teachings of Rāmkṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa are full of the Mother-idea. Baṅkimcandra went further and combined the idea of the Mother and the Motherland and the result was the "Bande Mataram" song. In the vision of Kamalākānta, Baṅkimcandra had already described his conception of the Motherland and the Bande Mataram song ~~and Ānandamath~~

(1) Ānandamaṭh, Pt. I, Ch. X.

(2) J.G.Woodroffe - Bharata Śakti, p. 123; Also Indian Art and Letters, 1926, p.67; Ibid, 1927, p.71; B.K. Sarkar - The Futurism of Young Asia, p. 268.

(3) cf. The poetry of Ramprasād Sen, Kamalākānta Bhaṭṭācārya and others in Bengali Religious Lyrics, Śākta by E. J. Thompson and A.M. Spencer.

was a further expression of that ideal. (1)

Satyānanda explained to Mahendra the different forms of the Mother - the Mother in her true self, the Mother as she was, the Mother as she is and the Mother as she is to be. (2) In the beginning the Mother is sitting on the lap of Viṣṇu, then she is Jagaddhātrī, then Kālī and last of all she is Durgā. It is the last incarnation of the Mother that appealed to the Santāns most as in that form she is universally worshipped in Bengal specially in autumn. But it is rather incongruous that the Santāns who professed themselves as Vaiṣṇavas should instal Śākta idols in their temple and worship a Śākta deity instead of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This necessitated a new interpretation of Vaiṣṇavism and Satyānanda said, "Caitanya Deb's Vaiṣṇavism is not true Vaiṣṇavism, it is a half religion. The Viṣṇu of Caitanya Deb is full of love but God is not only love, He is also eternal strength. Caitanya Deb's Viṣṇu is full of love, the Viṣṇu of the

(1) Kamalākānter Daptar, Ch. XI.

(2) Ānandamath, Pt. I, Ch. XI.

Santānas is full of strength." (1)

The idea of the country as the Mother to which Bankimcandra gave such an impetus was seen in a more developed form at a later stage in Indian political and cultural history. Since the days of the Swadeshi agitation the country has been addressed as Mother India. The first appearance of that idea was in Bengal. It is prominent in the writings of poets like Rabindanath and in the writings and utterances of political leaders like C.R.Das.(2) A close observer of the Bengali mind says, "Bengali Nationalism, unlike Nationalism in other parts of India, is not sprung from memory, but has an imaginative source..... Poets and novelists evoked the Image of Bengal, the Mother watching over her children, the Land served by the Ganges and wonderful with wide, emerald fields, gracious mango-groves, far-spreading silences and limpid skies." (3)

The most interesting woman in the story

(1) Anandamath, Pt. II, CH. IV. Bankimcandra - Collected Works, Vol. II, p. 453, p. 456-57. For Caitanya's Vaisnavism, See: Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 761; Nicol Macnicol - Indian Theism, pp. 129-33.

(2) C. R. Das - Banglarkatha, Desabandhu Granthabali, p. 129, pp. 135-36.

(3) E. J. Thompson - The Reconstruction of India, p. 87.

is Jībanānda's wife Śānti. In early life she was a bit wild, but ~~the influence of~~ education tamed her. She did not prevent her husband from following a life of service. On one occasion, when Jībānanda broke down, she said, "Shame on you! You are a hero. It is my highest happiness that I am the wife of a hero. Will you forsake the duty of the hero for the sake of your humble wife? Do not love me. I do not want that happiness. But you should never give up your duty of heroism." (1) When she went to Satyānanda for initiation, she told him that a wife had a duty to her husband even when he dedicated his life to a noble cause. She said, "If the wife follows the husband, is that something against virtue? If the laws of the Santāns regard that as something sinful then that religion is no religion at all." (2) To her husband she said, "Marriage is for this life and for the life hereafter. Think that our marriage for this life has not taken place. It is for the next life." (3)

(1) Ānandamath, Pt. I, Ch. XVI.

(2) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. VII.

(3) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. III.

The difference between Śānti and Kalyāni is that Kalyāni left her husband for his good, while Śānti followed her husband so that his life's mission might be truly fulfilled. When Satyānanda asked Santi to dissuade Jībānanda from killing himself, she said, "My husband's duty is his own affair. Who am I to restrain him in such a matter? In this life the husband is a god to the wife, but after death duty is the god of all. To me my husband is great, but greater than he is his duty. I may any day give up my duty; but why should I ask him to do so?" (1) Śānti had a lofty ideal of wedded love and looked at marriage from the religious standpoint. (2)

Satyānanda was a patriot, an idealist and at the same time a man of action, who had dedicated his life to the service of the country, though his methods were not always honest. When his dreams of a Hindu supremacy were shattered, a mysterious Mahāpurus came to him and said, "Your work is finished, the Muhammadan

(1) Ānandamath, Pt. III, Ch. VII.

(2) See Keyserling - The Book of Marriage for the Hindu Idea of Marraige.

power is gone. There is no need of unnecessary loss of human life." When the Mahāpurus said that the English would rule the country, tears ran down the cheeks of Satyānanda. Looking at the image of the Motherlike country, with folded hands the patriot said, "Alas, Mother! It has not been possible to free you. Again you will fall into the hands of the infidels. Think it not the fault of your children. Alas, Mother! Why did I not die today in the field of battle?" ~~Pangs of sorrow wrenched his heart~~

The Mahāpurus explained to him that British rule would be beneficial to the country. Satyānanda's work ended in failure as some of the associates chosen by him were moral defaulters. In a great enterprise men of firm character and strong principles are needed.

Both in the past and in recent years this novel has met with criticism from many quarters. An able observer of the Indian mind like the Earl of Ronaldshay (now Marquess of Zetland), thinks that it played a great part in what he regards as "perverted patriotism" of Indians. (1) Another writer mixes up the main idea of

(1) Ronaldshay - The Heart of Āryāvarta, p. 86. In Chap.X. he discusses Anandamath in detail. See also Verney Lovett - History of the Indian Nationalist Movement, pp. 62-63.

this novel as embodied in the Bande Mataram song with "the" cult of the bloodthirsty Kali, Shakti worship and the revival of Tantric ritual," which of course, is far from what Bankimcandra had in his mind. (1) Sir Valentine Chirol mistook the Bande Mataram song for an old folksong. (2) But even the sternest critics of the song are agreed in the opinion that it has become the "Marseillaise" of nationalist Bengal and other parts of India. (3) Bande Mataram was certainly written to express "patriotic fervour", but it does not express "aggresive hostility" to the British as is assumed in some quarters. (4)

About the song itself Bankimcandra said, "One day you will see, after twenty years you will see, Bengal has become mad over this song - the Bengali has become excited." (5) Surendranath Banerjea writes, "BankimeChunder Chatterjee could hardly have anticipated

(1) G.T. Garratt - An Indian Commentary, p. 136.

(2) India, p. 118.

(3) J.D.Anderson in the Modern Review, January, 1919, p.21.

(4) O'Malley - History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, p. 500.

(5) Bankim Kāhinī (in Jibani) p. 52.

the part it was destined to play in the Swadeshi movement, or the assured place it was to occupy in all national demonstrations. Dante, when he sang of Italian unity, had no conception of the practical use to which his song would be put by Mazzini and Garibaldi, or the part it would play in the political evolution of the Italian people. Men of genius scatter their ideals broadcast. Some of them fall on congenial soil. Time and the forces of time nurse them. They ripen into an abundant harvest fraught with unspeakable good to future generations." (1) Surendranath Banerjea was probably ignorant of Bankimcandra's own expectations regarding the influence of his song, which were more than realised in Bengal, in the early years of the present century. If Bankimcandra had written only Anandamath and nothing else, it would have been sufficient to keep his name alive for ever and give him an honoured place among India's great sons.

(1) A Nation in the Making, p. 206.

CHAPTER XV

DEBĪ CAUDHURĀṆĪ.

P L O T.

Brajeśvar, son of Haraballabh, a Kulīn zamindar, had three wives - Praphulla, Nayantārā and Sāgar. Praphulla was not allowed to live in her husband's house as an unfounded scandal was attached to her mother's name. One day Praphulla came to her husband's house being hard pressed by poverty, but her father-in-law would not allow her to stay there. She met her husband through the help of her co-wife Sāgar and Brajeśvar gave her a ring when they parted. Praphulla then returned to her mother's house. After her mother's death she lived alone. Durlabh Cakravartī, a zamindar's naib, one night kidnapped her with the help of a woman Phulmaṇi and as the naib's men were conveying her elsewhere, they abandoned her on the way on account of a false alarm of robbers. Praphulla was left alone in the woods. Ultimately she found a ruined building in the jungle, where an old Vaiṣṇava was living. She nursed him in his last hours and he left all his wealth to her. Bhabānī Pāṭhak, leader of a band of robbers came across her and trained her to be the queen of the robbers. Praphulla assumed the name of Debī Caudhurāṇi. In the meantime Braja's father was hard pressed for money. Braja's father-in-law refused to help him

and on his way back the followers of Debī Caudhurāṇī stopped his boat and transferred him by force to her boat. There Debī's companions Nisi and Dibā and Braja's wife Sāgar played some pranks with him. Braja was given a loan of the required sum of money by Debī Caudhurāṇī and the ring he had given to Praphulla. It was then he understood that Debī Caudhurāṇī was none other than his wife, whom he had thought dead. Haraballabh instead of paying back the loan, arranged with the Collector of Rungpore to have Debī Caudhurāṇī arrested. He accompanied Lt. Brenan, who was sent for that purpose. Braja came to meet Debī Caudhurāṇī as promised. She herself was ready to surrender when she heard about the plot of Haraballabh. But Braja said that he would take her back as his wife. She then captured Lt. Brenan by a ruse. Haraballabh was also captured. A storm separated Debī Caudhurāṇī's boat from the boats of the English soldiers. Lt. Brenan was then released. Haraballabh was sent back home on condition that his son would have to marry Nisi's supposed sister. In the guise of the sister of Nisi, Debī Caudhurāṇī returned to her husband's house. Later on everybody knew that she was Praphulla.

Debī Caudhurāṇī was published in 1884.[1] In the preface, Baṅkimcandra said that between the Debī Caudhurāṇī of his novel and the historical Debī Caudhurāṇī, there was very little connection. Sir W.W.Hunter in his "Statistical Account of Bengal" gives an extract from a report on the district of Rungpore by the Collector, Mr. Glazier (1873), "In 1787, Lt. Brenan was employed in this quarter against a notorious leader of dakaits (gang robbers), named Bhawani Pathak. He despatched a native officer, with twenty-four sepoys, in search of the robbers, who surprised Pathak, with sixty of his followers, in their boats. A fight took place, in which Pathak himself and three of his lieutenants were killed, and eight wounded, besides forty-two taken prisoners. Pathak was a native of Bajpur and was in league with another noted dakait, named Majnu Shah, who made yearly raids from the southern side of the Ganges. We catch a glimpse from the Lieutenant's report of a female dakait, by name Debi Chaudhrani, also in league with Pathak. She lived in boats, had a large force of barkandazs in her pay, and committed dakaitis on her own account, besides receiving a share of the booty obtained by Pathak. Her title of Chaudhrani would imply that she was a zamindar, probably a petty one, else

(1) Bhabānī Pāṭhak (1900) by Aedārnāth Biśvās, a sequel to Debī Caudhurāṇī, retains some of the original characters, but is far from interesting.

she need not have lived in boats, for fear of capture." (1) This account was obviously the basis of Bańkimcandra's Debī Caudhurāṇī.

The background of the novel is a very dark period in the history of Bengal. The East India Company was ruling Bengal as the representative of the titular Nawab at Murshidabad and Warren Hastings was at the helm of affairs in Calcutta. The notorious Debi Singh whose misdeeds Burke so eloquently condemned was in charge of the revenues of the North Bengal districts. (2) Dacoity was a common occurrence in those days and it occupies also a large space in this novel. (3) In Debī Caudhurāṇī, Phulmaṇi and Durlabh ran away in fear of dacoits. Bańkimcandra had in mind his own encoutner with dacoits on one occasion and he could not resist the temptation of providing some humour at the cost of Durlabh, who exhibited such cowardice before a woman. (4)

In the character of Praphulla, Bańkimcandra has emphasised the view that there is no better life for a married woman than sharing it with her husband. Praphulla said to Nisi,

(1) Vol. VII, pp. 158-59.

(2) Speech at the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Vol.I, pp.213-33.

(3) O'Malley - History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under British Rule, pp. 208-9.

(4) Bańkim Jīvanī, pp. 179-80. cf. Gajapati's flight in fear of ghosts in Durgeśnandinī, Pt. I, Ch. XV.

"The ornament of a woman is her husband." (1) When she met her husband as a captive in her own boat she broke down completely. Nisi truly remarked about Praphulla's leadership, "Such things are not for women. If women have to follow that path, they have to be like me. My Brajeśvar and the lord of Baikuntha are one and the same. There is no Brajeśvar to make me weep." (2) The disciplined life of Praphulla under Pāthak's tutelage could not make her forget her true position as a wife. When Nisi told Praphulla that Śrīkṛṣna was her husband, Praphulla said, "You have not had a husband. Therefore you speak in this way. If you had had one, you would not have been satisfied with Śrīkṛṣna."

Bankimcandra's own view was, "If love is pure, the husband is the first step to the attainment of God."(3) Praphulla told Bhabānī Pāthak that such a life did not suit her. She did not think that any good lay in a life of lawlessness. She felt that she had no right to a life of renunciation. Her true place was in the family and not

(1) Debī Caudharāṇī, Pt. II, Ch. XI.

(2) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. VIII.

(3) Ibid - Pt. I, Ch. XIII.

outside it. The finest qualities of a woman can never show themselves except in family life. Praphulla said to Sāgar, "This is woman's true function. To rule is not her calling. The difficult life if the life of the family. No system of yoga is more difficult than this. We have to deal always with many uneducated, selfish and inexperienced people. It is our business to see that all of them are happy. What penance is more difficult than that? What deed is of greater merit than this?" (1) Praphulla was no selfish wife. She would not risk the lives of her followers for the sake of her husband when the English attacked her boat. He was her husband, but who was he to her followers? (2) Forsaken by her husband, she harboured no bitter thoughts about him. As Debī Caudhurāṇī, she was a leader of men, rich and powerful. But in her lonely moments, she certainly longed to be the devoted wife of her husband, helping him and serving him. The trappings of a queenly splendour could not make her happy. To her Brajeśvar was a divinity on earth and as a fitting reward for all her travails, the author reunites her to him.

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. III, Ch. XIII.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. IV.

Brajeśvar was an obedient son. His father and the society to which he belonged were against Praphulla. He consoled himself with the Hindu teaching that to the son the father was heaven and religion and in the father's pleasure the gods were pleased. It may be said that Braja had no personality of his own and was too docile a son. But it should be said in his favour that he was brought up in an environment which taught him to obey his parents implicitly. He could not allow his father to be degraded in society for his own happiness. It was only when he was sure that he could boldly face his father that he agreed to the stratagem of his marriage with a supposed Kulin woman. He said, "Can there be any double dealing with one's father?.....If I cheat my father, then I shall have no compunction in cheating others."(1) Therefore he decided to make a candid confession of everything to his father. He did not forsake Praphulla when she was beset with the danger of being arrested by the English. As his wife he could forsake her a hundred times but as she was under his guardianship it was his duty to stand by her. (2) He had received a rude shock when Sagar told him that Debī Caudhurāṇī was

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. III, Ch.X.

(2) Ibid, Pt. III, Ch. III.

Praphulla. Braja could not think of her in league with robbers. He had too high a notion of her. (1) His manliness saved everything at the end. Praphulla understood that Brajeśvar was not a man to take up any responsibility unless he could carry it. (2) Braja was also a witty person. He enjoyed many combats of wit with his aged grand-aunt. (3) But he carried his gallantry too far in the boat of Debī Caudhurāṇī and was taught a sharp lesson by his wife Sāgar, whom he had once insulted. (4) As a Kulīn husband his was not an enviable life but when Praphulla came back there was happiness for him.

Braja's father Haraballabh was an avaricious and treacherous man. He was the typical cringing renegade who lives upon the favour of others by doing for them all their dirty jobs. He was such a coward that he began to weep when Braja slapped Lt. Brenan's cheeks. Lt. Brenan is a type of those Europeans who have an exaggerated sense of racial superiority. He said to one of Debī's lieutenants,

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. II, Ch. IX.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. X.

(3) Ibid - Pt. I, Ch. V.

(4) Ibid - Pt. II, Ch. VI.

"How dare a Bengali hang an Englishman?" (1)

As for the anarchism of the type practised by Bhabānī Pāṭhak and his followers, Bankimcandra's idea was that what they regarded as service to others was nothing but oppression. In his opinion, if God did not punish the evil-doer, the ruler was to do it. The robbers could serve peace-loving people but the punishment of the wicked was to be left in the hands of a superior power. (2) To dispense justice is the function of the ruler. If that function is usurped by some one else, the will of God is nullified. Human society accepts the rule of a competent person or group of persons so that equity may be meted out to everybody. If the individuals constituting society begin to exercise that function, the very foundations of the social order are shaken.

Of two beautiful descriptions of Bengali life in the villages found in this novel one is Bṛeja's visit to the house of his father-in-law. (3) The other is the ceremony of welcoming a new bride. (4) Such events

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. III, Ch. Ix.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III. Ch. XI.

(3) Ibid - Pt. II. Ch. II.

(4) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. XII.

are of great importance in village life and though the first one (the visit of a son-in-law) has become less important than before an account of economic reasons, the second (the arrival of a new bride) still creates a good deal of interest among Bengali women. These two chapters are good illustrations of Bankimcandra's powers of careful observation and graphic description.

In this novel Bankimcandra spoke of "niskāma dharma". (1) What he meant was that desire was not bad but it must be such that other people should be taken into consideration. Action should be undertaken for the good of others and not for one's personal benefit or gain. This "niskāma" has been well explained by a recent authoritative writer on Indian Philosophy, "Naiṣkarmya, or abstention from action, is not the true law of morality, but niṣkāmatā or disinterestedness.....All desires are not bad. The desire after righteousness is divine.....Service of humanity is worship of God. To work desirelessly and impersonally for the sake of the world and God does not bind us.....The Gita does not ask us to abhor the common business of life, but demands the suppression of all selfish desires." (2) Other

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. I. Ch. XVI.

(2) S. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy, Vol. I. pp. 568-69. Bankimcandra explains this idea in Dharmatattva, Ch.XIV.

teachings from the Gītā which Bankimcandra discussed in this novel are that there was no greater religious virtue than humility, that the senses must be controlled and that the ultimate result of all actions must be left in the hands of God. Bhabānī Pāṭhak taught Prophulla that God lived in all creatures as the Gita says and she should distribute gifts to all living creatures. (1) Later on in Sītārām, Bankimcandra resumed similar discussions of religious matters and critics of literature rightly think that Bankimcandra the religious preacher clouded the art of Bankimcandra the novelist. (2)

(1) "He who seeth Me everywhere, and seeth everything in Me, of him will I never lose hold, and he shall never lose hold of Me.

He who, established in unity, worshippeth Me, abiding in all beings, that Yogī liveth in Me, whatever his mode of living.

He who, through the likeness of the Self, O Arjuna, seeth equality in everything, whether pleasant or painful, he is considered a perfect Yogī." - The Bhagavad Gita, Tr. Mrs. Besant and Bhagavan Das, pp. 123-24.

(2) Prabāsī, Vol. XXXI, Pt. I, p. 806.

CHAPTER XVI

SĪTĀRĀM

P L O T.

Sītārām Rāy, a zamīndar, had three wives - Śrī, Nandā and Ramā. Śrī lived with her mother and her brother Gangārām, as Sītārām's father objected to her living with her husband on the ground of certain astrological calculations which foretold that she would be the cause of the death of one dear to her. Gangārām was ordered by the Muhammadan Kazi to be buried alive for insulting a Muhammadan fakir. Śrī prevailed upon Sītārām to come to her brother's help. Sītārām's intercession on behalf of Gangārām failed and ultimately Sītārām had to rescue him by force. Sītārām, who had met Śrī after a long time then proposed that she should live with him. She refused to do so when she learnt the reason of her separation from him. Sītārām gradually became a powerful zamindar and founded a new town. During his absence in Delhi, where he had gone to see the Emperor, the Nawab's fouzdar decided to attack Sītārām's town. Ramā became afraid when she heard about the plans of the fouzdar and secretly asked Gangārām to look after the safety of the place. Gangārām was enamoured of Ramā and promised the fouzdar to surrender

the town on condition that Ramā should be given to him as a reward. After her parting from her husband, Śrī went on a pilgrimage to the Jagannāth temple at Puri. On her way, she met a female Vaiṣṇav Jayantī, who initiated her into Vaiṣṇavism. Śrī and Jayantī returned to Sītārām's town the very day that it was attacked by the fouzdar. Gangārām did not do anything to save the place. Fortunately Sītārām arrived there just in time to drive the Muhammadans back. Gangārām was allowed to leave the country on Śrī's intervention, after he had been indicted in open court and punishment ordered for his dastardly conduct. Ramā was suspected of infidelity but proved her innocence. From this time Sītārām, instead of looking after his administrative work, sought Śrī's company and disorders arose in his territories. Jayantī to divert Sitārām's mind removed Śrī elsewhere. This incensed Sītārām so much that he tried to insult Jayantī publicly. He gradually went astray. Ramā did broken hearted as Sītārām neglected her. The Muslims again attacked Sītārām and in the fight that ensued, his general Mṛṇmay was killed. Sri and Jayantī helped Sītārām to convey Nandā and the children to some place of safety. Sītārām's kingdom was destroyed by the Muslims and Śrī and Jayantī vanished.

Sītārām was published in 1887. A second edition followed in 1888 and changes were made in some of the chapters.

Sītārām actually was an historical person, but in his novel Bankimcandra has not been particular about historical truth. Those interested in the history of Sītārām should read Westland's "A Report of the District of Jessore"(1) and Stewart's History of Bengal.(2) As described in the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Sītārām "was a talukdar in a village called Hariharnagar on the bank of the Madhumati river, and is said to have been deputeddby the Nawab of Dacca to collect his revenues; but as the revenues never went further than Sitaram himself, the Nawab sent an army against him and at length succeeded in capturing him about the year 1712."(3) The Imperial Gazetteer probably meant the Nawab of Murshidabad when it wrote the Nawab of Dacca. According to Westland Sītārām poisoned himself. Stewart's account of the end of Sītārām that he was impaled alive with his accomplices and the women and children were sold as slaves is disbelieved by Westland, who thinks that this version of Stewart was based on sources which depreciate Sītārām. The

(1) pp. 25-38.

(2) pp. 414-16.

(3) Vol. XIV, pp.92-93; Also Bangajīban, Āswin, 1302 B.Y.

historical Sītārām must have been a quite ordinary person but Bankimcandra has surrounded him with idealism and romance.

Sītārām had some of the qualities which make a leader. But he had grave faults as well. His first fault was that he submitted to the superstitious belief of his father and discarded Śrī. When he saw her again after several years, she had grown into a beautiful woman and he wanted her. It was not out of pure disinterestedness that he asked Śrī to come back to him. He had two other wives. Nandā was devoted to him, but she could not inspire him. (1) Ramā was of a nagging disposition. Śrī's beauty attracted him as something new in his eyes. He thought she would make him a good wife. It was not real love, but mere hankering for novelty. For a time they did not see each other as Śrī went away to Orissa. But after her return, his mind became so full of thoughts of her that he forgot his duties as a ruler. He could no longer be a leader of men. The moral responsibility of his downfall rested with Śrī. Sītārām forgot that satisfaction of the senses except for right purposes was sinful. (2) His

(1) Sītārām, Pt. I, Ch. X.

(2) Sītārām, Pt. III, Ch. VII.

constructive work came to ruin completely. The character of Sītārām illustrates the teachings of the Gītā that musing on the objects of sense makes man attached to them and gradually he is led to destruction. Therefore full control over the senses is necessary for happiness in life. (1)

The three wives of Sītārām represent three different types. Śrī was devoted to Sītārām in a way. In her conversation with Jayantī, Śrī said, "Devotion to the husband is the only virtue of woman.....I do not know God but I know my husband.....I do not want God in preference to my husband. Between the sorrow that I have to bear through living apart from my husband and the happiness that I shall have in the attainment of God, I prefer the grief of separation." (2) Śrī regarded her husband as a divinity. If she had lived with him, the

(1) "Man, musing on the objects of sense, convolveth an attachment for these; from attachment ariseth desire; from desire anger cometh forth; From anger proceedeth delusion; from delusion confused memory; from confused memory the destruction of Reason; from destruction of Reason he perishes. But the disciplined self, moving among sense - objects with senses free from attraction and repulsion mastered by the Self, goeth to Peace." - The Bhugavad Gita, Tr. Besant Das, pp. 51-52; Bankimcandra - Collected Works, Vol. III, pp, 81-85; S.N. Dasgupta - A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II. p. 493.

(2) Sītārām, Pt. I, Ch. XIV.

sense of nearness would have lessened the ardour. For a time there was a conflict between her love for her husband and a life of renunciation. She did more harm to Sītārām in refusing to share his responsibilities. Śrī was not like Bhramar, (1) nor was she like Sūryamukhī, (2) She did not belong to the class of ideal wives described by Bankimcandra in one of his essays. (3) The ideal of "niskāma karma", which was explained to Śrī by Jayanti, was another teaching from the Gītā which Bankimcandra stressed in this novel. (4) But Śrī misunderstood, or rather failed to observe the teaching imparted to her. The ruin of Sītārām's career was partly due to Śrī's failure to fulfil her duties in life. The Gītā truly says,

> ".....none shall come
> By mere renouncements unto perfection." (5)

Ramā was full of love for her husband, but she was

(1) Krsnakānter Uil, Pt. II, Ch. IX.

(2) Bisabrksa, Ch. XXXVIII.

(3) Collected Works, Vol. I. p. 760.

(4) "He who performeth a prescribed action, saying, "It ought to be done," O Arjuna, relinquishing attachment and also fruit, that relinquishment is regarded as pure." - The Bhagavad Gita, Tr. Besant and Das, p. 298, also Ibid, pp. 57-60.

(5) Edwin Arnold - The Song Celestial, p. 26.

often in tears even over trifling matters. "It is not merely reciprocal love that constitutes conjugal happiness," says Bankimcandra, "but it is also oneness of purpose and sympathy for each other." (1) Nandā did not take the slightest interest in her husband's activities. Her greatest ambition was to die with him. To her Sītārām symbolised religion. No one was more sorry than Nanda when he was rushing headlong to disaster. But she did not possess the courage or capacity to guide him. Once only she rose to the occasion, when she saved Jayantī from disgrace. (2) When Sītārām intended to discard Ramā, Nandā reminded him of his duties and said, "Will you forsake her who is faultless without any trial? Is this your royal virtue? Will you do it because Rāmcandra did it? But he was the full Brahma." (3) Nandā could never forgive her husband's neglect of Ramā, which ultimately led to her death. Still, Nandā was the best wife to Sītārām among the three.

(1) Sītārām, Pt. I. Ch. X.

(2) Ibid - Pt. III, Ch. XVIII.

(3) Ibid,- Pt. III, Ch. I.

In Ānandamath, Rājsimha and Sītārām, Bankimcandra's purpose was to preach the gospel of patriotism. The most eloquent note in this novel is his intense love for Hinduism. When Śrī's brother was accused before the Kazi, she said to Sītārām, "Who will protect the Hindu except a Hindu?" (1) To the Kazi, Sītārām said about Gangārām, "He is related to me more closely than a brother, than a son, because he has taken shelter with me. It is one of the tenets of the Hindu scriptures that at the cost of one's life, at the cost of all that one has got, the person who seeks shelter has to be protected." (2) This novel was written during the renaissance of Hinduism in Bengal when a new interpretation was being given to that religion by several distinguished people. Bankimcandra's deep veneration for Hinduism is further seen in this novel from his description of the sculptural remains of Orissa and his pride in his birth as a Hindu. (3) But Bankimcandra chose a rather poor subject for his story. If it were his intention to show the

(1) Sītārām, Pt. I. Ch. II.

(2) Ibid - Pt. I. Ch. IV.

(3) Ibid - Pt. I. Ch. XIII.

greatness of the Hindus, he ought to have written a story of the achievement of something great instead of a story which is one of sheer destruction. Sītārām appealed to Bankimcandra's imagination as the last remarkable Hindu zamindar of Bengal who dared to revolt against the Muslim power. The subject certainly handicapped the author, but this much can be said in his favour that he made some amends for his choice of the subject-matter by the note of love of his country's civilisation and culture, which is present to such a large extent in this novel.

CHAPTER XVII

BAMILEKE-NDA: SOME ASPECTS OF ITS KIND AND ART.

Bankimcandra was something more than a mere story-teller and in his novels there are various aspects of his thought which deserve more than cursory attention. Long before his death he was recognised as a great force in the country. A contemporary journal observed, "Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterji is the first Bengali author of the day. He is now a great power, a great educating power and we all take leave to doubt whether he or our schools and colleges shape modern Bengali childhood and youth more effectively and decisively.....He is the man of most national importance in the country just now." (1)

The world that Bankimcandra has created is peopled with a variety of men and women. But he regards them all from one standpoint. Bankimcandra always hopes for the best. In life there are clouds and sunshine, laughter and tears, smiles and sighs. But he asks with the poet, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" He believes in fate, yet he is no disbeliever in the possibilities of human effort. He does not allow his characters to wait for opportunities to turn up; he makes them create opportunities for themselves. Chance plays a strong part in the lives of many of his characters, but mere chance is not everything. The characters have their own initiative also. At times

(1) Calcutta Review, 1887, p. xxiv.

chains of circumstance ensnesh them, but they find some way of escape out of their difficulties. Those that cannot are sacrificed on the cruel altar of destiny, or by whatever name one may choose to call it.

Cynicism finds no place in his writings. The morbidity which disfigures the writings of many modern Bengali novelists is conspicuously absent in Bankimcandra's writings. His was a healthy and vigorous mind, keenly alert to all that was happening round him and enthusiastic about everything conducive to human welfare. He was no pessimist brooding over human follies and foibles. Nor was it his intention to try to fashion a new world of imagination, where men and women could take shelter from the everyday affairs of the world. He believed that virtue would triumph over vice, that true love would find a way, that wrong-doers would be punished and that in sacrifice and service to others there was happiness.

He did not regard human beings as perfect, they to him were mere men and women, possessing the merits and defects of their species. He has not singled out one particular man or woman as the epitome of all virtues or the embodiment of all vices. Man to him is no divinity. Neither is woman a heavenly creature. If she has her gracious qualities, she has also her inevitable shortcomings. Out of varied human qualities Bankimcandra made his men and women. Can we say that

they are flawless and perfect? Can it be said about them that they are ideal characters? About some of them this much can be said that they come near the mark which might be regarded as the starting point of human perfection. But even then there is something of the world about them. Without something which betokens their affinity with the rest of mankind, they would be lifeless and cold like marble statues or images made from some solid piece of rock. It is not lifeless creatures or imaginary beings with whom Bankimcandra has peopled his works of fiction. In his writings one finds men and women of flesh and blood, men and women, such as it is possible to meet in real life. If there is a certain amount of romantic glamour around some of them, it is not due to any attempt at an air of unreality. The characters in a novel ought to have some relation to actual life. The novelist deals with human passions. He cannot certainly make it his business to create life which never is nor can be. It was to real life that Bankimcandra went for his materials, yet he was no realist in the sense that some of the modern novelists are.

He portrayed life with history as the background in some of his novels. But the historical interes rarely dominated the art of the novelist. He was an accomplished scholar and described historical times with

picturesque taste and accuracy. But he fully realised the difference between fiction and history. Therefore those who expect to find a fastidious antiquarian with a profound reverence for the past only and an intense relish for historical research will be somewhat disappointed in him. There is every reason to believe that he was acquainted with what Lytton wrote in the preface to the Last Days of Pompeii: "The intuitive spirit which infuses antiquity into ancient images is perhaps the true learning." (1) In one of his novels Bankimcandra said, "The novelist should be concerned with the elucidation of the inner meaning of events - it is needless to keep any connection with history." (2) A distinguished critic says, "Too great attention to veracity and propriety of detail is very apt to stifle the story by overlaying it." (3) Bankimcandra regarded the novel as a serious type of literary work. He wrote to a friend, "The Novel is to me the most difficult work of all, as it requires a good deal of time and undivided attention to elaborate the conception and to subordinate the incidents and characters to the central idea." (4)

He differed from Rameścandra Datta in whose

(1) 1854 Edition.
(2) Sītārām, Pt. III, Ch. I. "ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসের প্রকৃতিগত দোষ এই যে, ইহাতে সত্য মিথ্যা ঐতিহাসিক বিবেচনা করিতে হয়।"
(3) Saintsbury-Essays in English Literature, Second Series, p. 375.
(4) Bengal: Past and Present, April-June, 1914, p. 275.

novels history comes first and life occupies a secondary position. Ramesandra had the mind of the historian, Bankimeandra the mind of the artist. To the former the characters were part of history, to the latter history was part of human life. Bankimeandra regarded history as something quite important and deplored the fact that Bengal had no real history. (1) But he made no fetish of history in his novels. He saw that the best way to inspire a taste for history in the minds of those for whom he was writing would be the presentation of historical incidents and persons combined with men and women from his own imagination. It was that method which critics like to call " uniting the really historical with the imaginary" (2). In the atmosphere of history he never lost the perspective of the novelist. Full freedom was therefore allowed by him to the characters to develop themselves. Ramesandra's novels give one the impression that they are mere history in the garb of novels and that the characters in them are secondary things. The historian in him superseded the novelist, while Bankimeandra could keep himself above the temptation of merely recording historical events. The gift of story-telling and an intimate knowledge of more than one epoch of history are two of the necessary qualifications of the

(1) Collected Works, Vol. II, P.636.

(2) A.S.E. Canning - History in Fact and Fiction, P.245.

historical novelist. (1) Bankimcandra possessed both these requisites.

Bankimcandra voiced in his writings some of the most outstanding thoughts and ideas of that age in Bengal. It has been remarked by a recent writer on the Novel, "The very nature of the novelist's art binds him to the present with bonds that other writers are free from. He is first an observer, then a recorder. He must be not only in the world, but of it; for how else should he gain the sympathy and understanding without which all his art is vain? If his thought ranges far beyond that of his contemporaries, if his sensibility is painfully keener than theirs, and if his conduct breaks through most, or even many of their well established conventions, he will probably turn poet, or philosopher, mystic or revolutionary; and almost certainly he will discontinue writing novels.....But if, as nearly always is the case, he remains in essentials a man of his time, the prevailing thought and temper of his time will determine the spiritual quality of his work." (2)

The times in which Bankimcandra lived were marked by intellectual ferment in Bengal. The rebellious intellectual freedom of the students of the Hindu College, the

(1) The Forum, 1897-98, Vol. XXIV, The Historical Novel; cf. what Scott said in the advertisement to the first edition of the Antiquary-Introduction, Vol. I, p. 188.

(2) J. Carruthers-Scheherazade or the Future of the English Novel, pp. 31-32.

"Young Bengal" spirit, though it gave to Bengal a number of men of ability and merit, had too much of unrest in it to please Bankim. To pull down the old order was the motto of "Young Bengal". (1) Its interest was not so much constructive. Bankimcandra came at a time when the first outbursts of this spirit were practically over. Men who had been shaken off their balance had had time to regain their mental equilibrium. The storm had come and passed leaving behind it doubts and uncertainties and out of these a new order had to be created. Between too much of anglicism and too much of conservatism a compromise had to be made. In society, in religion, in culture, a new foundation had to be laid for a better order of things to take the place of the existing chaos, and Bankimcandra was one of those who applied themselves to that responsible task. It was through literature that he could render his best service. In the practical field of religious or social reform, or in matters of educational and political advancement, he could have done little even if he had chosen to attempt it. Through literature he could reach all sections of his countrymen-those that read for pleasure and those that read for profit.

The literary renaissance in Bengal in the last century was ushered in by those who had fully understood and

(1) Works of Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Vol. IV, p. 203; Rantanu Lahiri, ed. by Sir Roper Lethbridge, Ch. IV, Ch. V.

assimilated foreign influences.[1] Rāja Rāmmohan Rāy, Akṣaykumār Datta, Iśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar, Michael Madusūdan Datta, Baṅkimcandra were products of Western education. Baṅkimcandra looked to his country's cultural heritage for inspiration, while deriving at the same time material from his knowledge of Western culture. "We are disciples of the West", he stated emphatically on more than one occasion.[2] He had a high regard for his country's culture, but it never for a moment made him a narrow-minded patriot. It was not his principle to raise his country or society to a great height by disparaging other countries and societies.[3] Therefore he could easily accept the best in the culture of the West with the same amount of enthusiasm as he felt for Indian culture. He did not forget that he was an Indian, but he remembered also that he was a man living in the second a half of the nineteenth century, at a time when the West was exerting a strong influence on the Indian mind.

A prominent note in his novels is his love for his country. But it should never for a moment be assumed that before Baṅkimcandra there was no feeling of patriotism or nationalism in Bengal. Many years before he made his

(1) Coomaraswamy-Art and Swadeshi, p. 111.

(2) Collected Works, Vol. II, p. 541; see also preface to Gītā (Collected Works, Vol. III)

(3) Dharmatattva, Pt. 1, Anuśīlan, Ch. XXIV.

appearance as a novelist, a Bengali periodical observed, "He who looks idly at the sad state of his country must be an extraordinarily patient man. Such a man.....is unfit to be called a man." (1) Iśvarcandra Gupta in his poems ridiculed many outlandish ideas. Even Madhusūdan Datta, himself a thoroughly anglicised Bengali, on the eve of his departure for Europe, remembered his motherland in a poem, which has since then become a classic. Raṅgalāl Bandyopādhyāy wrote, "Who wants to live without freedom?" Rājnārāyaṇ Basu and Nabagopāl Mitra found an outlet for their activities by promoting national feeling.(2) The Hindu Mela organised in 1867 by Nabagopāl Mitra helped to spread the feeling of patriotism in Bengal.(3) Bankimcandra was a thinker and not an active worker like the organisers of the Hindu Mela. He found it most convenient to appeal to nationalistic and patriotic feelings through a popular medium - the novel, and was more successful than many other writers. Although political subjection chafed him he was against all anarchical and revolutionary methods. "Revolutions are very generally processes of self-torture and rebels are suicides," he wrote in the preface to Ānandamaṭh. "To go against the ruler is a

(1) Kalikātā Patrikā, 1858, p.7.

(2) Rājnārāyaṇ Basu-Sekāl ār ekāl, p. 70.

(3) Rabindranath Tagore - My Reminiscences, pp. 140-41; Hindumelār Bibaraṇ; Isāncandra Basu-Hindu Jāti; Rājnārāyaṇ Basu-Bibidha Prabandha Pt. I (Introduction).

great sin," was his opinion in another novel. (1)

Bańkimcandra had a strong sense of national self-respect. (2) That was the reason why he could not reconcile himself to the account of the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtyar Khalji with a few horsemen. Again and again his mind revolted against such a suggestion and more than once it travelled to the same theme. (3) The same bent of mind led him to criticise the attitude of those who think that western thought is superior in all respects to Indian; "You have a misconception that whatever the English think is true, what they do not know is false, beyond human knowledge and impossible. Really that is not so.....The English know something, our ancestors also knew something. What the English know the sages did not know. What they Knew, the English have not been able to discover even now." (4) This does not mean that he was claiming that Indian thought was superior to Western thought. He was not blind to the defects in national character. One of his characters says that no amount of reproach was sufficient for the Bengalis and they could digest every kind of reproof. (5) He thought that unless national weaknesses were ruthlessly exposed the race to which

(1) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. I, Ch. VI.
(2) Bibidha Prabandha-Bāṅgālīr Bāhubal.
(3) Collected Works, Vol. II, 637; Mṛṇālinī, Pt. IV, Ch. IV & V; Kamalākānta, p. 158-69.
(4) Rajanī, Pt. III, Ch. VI.
(5) Kṛṣṇakānter Wil, Pt. I, Ch. X.

he belonged would lag behind in the march of progress. Bankimcandra's criticism was never malicious. He wanted the people to get rid of those drawbacks which sap the vitality of a race and he was never afraid of using the harshest language, the most scathing terms, and the most biting satire.(1)

Bankimcandra belonged to the period of Hindu revival in Bengal, of which the poetical side is seen in Nabīncandra Sen's works such as Raibatak, Pravās, Kurukṣetra. The study of the sacred books of the Hindus was a special feature of this movement. In 1887 Satyabrata Sāmasrāmī started a Vedic magazine. Rameścandra Datta translated the Vedas into Bengali. Nagendranāth Basu in Nasāri-Rahasya asserted the superiority of Hindu over European social institutions. Dvijendranāth Ṭhākur wrote a satire on the anglicising influence on Hindu life. Candranāth Basu contended for the superior spirituality of Hinduism as contrasted with Western materialism. Bankimcandra had great faith in Hinduism. But he did not go to any extreme. He adopted a balanced view. By Hinduism he did not mean the worship of innumerable deities. He made this perfectly clear in Ānandamath.(2) The low state to which ritualistic Hinduism had sunk pained him extremely. Once he wrote, "The Hindu who revives his religion is happy and worthy among men." (3)

(1) Kamalākānter Patra, Ch. III; Collected Works, Vol.III, p. 586, p. 690.
(2) Pt. IV, Ch. VIII.
(3) Sītārām, Pt. II, Ch. XVI.

It is not clear under what religious influences he came in his own life. Rāmkṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa was a contemporary of his and Baṅkimcandra used to visit him.(1) But it is doubtful if Rāmkṛṣṇa actively influenced Baṅkimcandra. Moreover Rāmkṛṣṇa was a Śākta and a worshipper of Kālī, while Baṅkimcandra was attracted to the Bhāgavad Gītā and the teachings of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Remaining outside the pale of the Hindu revivalists, he was one of the pioneers in the study of Hinduism and had a great deal to do with the publication of a series of works on Hinduism edited by Rameścandra Datta. Baṅkimcandra intended to translate parts of the Mahābhārata and the Gītā for this series but he died after translating the first two chapters of the Gītā. The general idea behind his works on religion was the unification of the Hindus and the interpretation of Hinduism in its best form.(2)

The idea of a Hindu political revival is more than once hinted at in his novels. Visionaries like Mādhabācārya and Satyānanda thought that such a revival was possible. Hindu principles and ideals in life and conduct were highly prized by Baṅkimcandra. Even a woman like Rohiṇī found it impossible to confess her love openly as she belonged

(1) Romain Rolland-Prophets of the New India, p. 136.

(2) Sāhitya-Parisat-Patrikā, 1301 B.Y; Bibidha Prabandha, p. 231 - "That which leads to the welfare of all Hindus is my duty."

to that race whose women died in the fire.(1) Mahārāṇā Rājsiṁha did not like his enemies die of hunger and said, "The Hindu knows that to supply food to the needy is a great merit. So he does not like even his enemy to die without food."(2) When Jagat took shelter in the Śāileśvar temple he said to those who were inside, "If you are women, sleep without anxiety. Not a blade of grass shall hurt your feet so long as the Rājput has the sword and buckler in his hands." After the duel Jagat said to Osmān, "The Rājput is not so ungrateful as to touch the body of one who has done his service." (3)

Bankimcandra was a young man when the social revolution began in Bengal and during his lifetime considerable attempts were made at social reform. He was fully alive to the need of a thorough cleansing of Bengali society from the abuses and malpractices that were prevalent. Though he deals in his novels with social problems, one gets the impression that pictures of social life interested him more than the actual solution of the problems to which he refers. Here again he differed from Rameścandra Datta, whose novels

(1) Kṛṣṇakānter Will, Pt. 1, Ch. XII.

(2) Rājsiṁha, Pt. VIII, Ch. VIII. Manucci, Vol. II, p.241 says that the Rana supplied food to the Mughuls.

(3) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. 1, Ch. XVIII.

of social life are full of problems typically of his own time. The remarriage of Hindu widows, the problem of the Hindu who received an education in Europe and becomes a social outcast, intercaste marriage were burning questions in his days. He was much bolder than Bańkimcandra in exposing social evils and a stronger advocate of progressive social ideals.

As love is the central pivot on which the main plot rests in most of Bańkimcandra's novels, we may appropriately enquire what his ideas on this matter were. He has not propounded a love-philosophy in the sense that Plato and Shelley may be said to have done. Of portraits of love at different stages of human life, he has given many examples. There is not a single novel of his in which there is not love of some kind or other, be it the love of a man for a woman, the love of the wife for the husband, the love of the young man for the maiden, or vice versa, the love of the patriot for the country, the love of the idealist for certain ideals. Of love between man and woman Bańkimcandra was a very good delineator. He had here a high standard. To him love which arose out of the appreciation of the qualities of a person was of more value than love which grew out of the appreciation of mere beauty. (1)

Although Bańkimcandra has depicted love as the

(1) Bisabṛkṣa, Ch. XXXII. Also Collected Works, Vol.I,p.819.

natural outcome of men and women coming into contact with one another, or arising from other causes such as early companionship, sudden meeting, pity, sympathy, gratitude, he did not think it improper to deal with sex-complications. He was no purist in the sense that in his treatment of love he was handicapped by any stereotyped proprieties. He believed in the primary instincts of human nature. That men and women are susceptible to love or attraction for each other under certain circumstances he fully recognised. Rohiṇī was a young widow. She was infatuated with Gobindalāl who lowered himself by a liaison with her. It was against all moral and social laws and both had to pay a heavy price for it. Kundanandinī fell in love with Nagendranāth, who in his turn had fallen in love with her. It is interesting to note here that in two of Baṅkimcandra's novels in which there are actual sex-complications a girl-widow is the central figure.(1) In Baṅkimcandra's time the girl-widow was a person, who might well be the centre of romance, hedged round as she was with many social conventions. She constituted a serious practical problem for Hindu society. Baṅkimcandra found in her a likely character for the novel. Since then Bengali society has broadened to some extent and writers have other materials from which they can draw their plots and characters.

(1) Cf. Binodinī in Cokher Bāli, Ramā in Pallīsamāj.

Bańkimcandra kept love above the call of the flesh. Yet it was best appreciated by him in the daily life of men and women. Although his ideal was married love and love which culminated in marriage even when it had existed in premarital days, love could exist without marriage, as is shown in the cases of Āyeṣā and Pratāp. Pratāp's self-sacrifice made the man greater than his love and in Āyeṣā's self-control the real woman in her came out more fully than the mere lover. But when love exists without marriage in Bańkimcandra's novels it is generally onesided. True it is that Śaibalinī and Pratāp loved each other, but Jagat did not reciprocate Āyeṣā's feelings. Nor did Labańga make it quite clear if she loved Amarnāth.

One of the most characteristic points in Bańkimcandra's novels is his success with women-characters. Was it due to any poetic idealisation of woman or was it an outcome of the new outlook on woman that is seen in nineteenth century Bengali literature and is noticed specially in the poetry of Madhusūdan, Rańgalāl, Bihārilāl and Nabīncandra? Certainly it was not the influence of Vaiṣṇava poetry in which Rādhā is so much a creation of poetic fancy. Bańkimcandra was not influenced by the soft poetry of Jayadeb in which there is such an abundant description of the charms of woman. In fact he utterly disliked the sensuous poetry of Jayadeb. (1)

(1) Bibidha Prabandha-Vidyāpati o Jayadeb.

His knowledge of the psychology of woman helped him to depict her sympathetically and his deep-rooted respect and innate reverence for womankind made him think of woman as "full of forgiveness, kindness and affection, the greatest success of God's creation." (1) Some of his women embody the best ideals of womanhood and indeed some of them are too faultless. He did not think of women as merely dressed up dolls. The heroinelike character of Draupadé attracted him more than the bashful and tender heroines in older Indian literature. (2) So he depicted brave and self-reliant women, women who could be depnnded upon and take risks in life and was successful with characters like Śānti, Bimalā and Nirmal.

He valued the proper education of women. Though his women were not college-ladies or girls educated in schools, many of them were accomplished. Tilottamā used to read Sanskrit poetry and romance, Bhramar and Dalanī read poetry, Śānti was educated with boys at a pandit's school, Bhabānī Pāṭhak supervised Praphulla's education in difficult subjects for several years. Bankimcandra brought many of his women out of the seclusion of the inner apartments and made them see what the world outside really was. But he regarded the home as the best place for them and not the

(1) Kṛṣṇakāntor Uil, Pt. II, Ch. XV.
(2) Collected Works, Vol. I, pp. 795-96.

outer world.

He realised that women were subjected to excessive social tyranny. (1) Some of his women felt that they were under too much social subjection. Bimalā said, "How are those to introduce themselves whose habit it is to live in secrecy? Since the day God forbade women to utter the names of their husbands, He also closed the way of their introducing themselves." (2) His women know their own limitations and confessed them frankly. But at times they were inclined to brag. Labaṅga said, "What does a man know about family life or about his relatives? His business is to earn money. Is man the master of the family?", and again, "What does it matter about a man's opinion? He has the same opinion that a woman has." (3) Kulsam says, "I have not seen the man who is able to find out the tricks of woman." (4) The customary Indian contempt for women was criticised by Baṅkimcandra in the remark that Foster made to Dalanī, "The people of your country have no respect for the words of women." (5)

(1) Sāmya, Ch. V. Baṅkimcandra pleaded for a better status for women.
(2) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. I, Ch. II.
(3) Rajanī, Pt. IV, Ch. 1.
(4) Candraśekhar, Pt. 11, Ch. 1.
(5) Ibid - Pt. V. Ch. 11.

Bankimcandra went so far as to disregard even the conventional ideas regarding the parentage of some of his women. Bimalā was not of pure birth, neither was Tilottamā's mother. But Bimalā's love for Birendra was in no way inferior to that of any other women in Bankimcandra's novels. What he most insisted upon was purity in the character of women. "There is nothing more virtuous in a woman than chastity," was his firm opinion.(1) In society woman holds an important position and so far as her relation to it is concerned she is bound by certain accepted notions. Therefore Katalu Khān had to vouch for Tilottamā's character. Saibalinī's character was proved stainless in open durbar before Mīr Kāsim. Still Candrasekhar said, "If any atonement is to be done for pleasing people, I shall do it." (2) A wife must be above all suspicions. But Bankimcandra was equally emphatic in insisting on purity in men as well. (3) For a single act of folly in his youth Amarnāth was branded with hot iron as a thief. Debendra, Nagendra, Gobindalāl suffered for lack of moral restraint.

It is natural that a writer, who preached high ideals of wifehood as we have already seen, should regard marriage as a great and sacred institution.(4) In

(1) Mrnālinī, Pt. III, Ch. VI.
(2) Candrasekhar, Pt. VI, Ch. VIII.
(3) Cf. Collected Works, Vol. I, p. 857.
(4) Collected Works, Vol. III, p. 108; Kamalākānter Daptar, Ch. V. See also Radhakrishnan - The Hindu view of Life, p. 84 and Coomaraswamy - The Dance of Siva, p. 87.

Kapālkuṇḍalā the priest says, "Marriage is woman's only step to religion; even the Mother of the world is wedded to Śiva."(1) But Baṅkimcandra was not blind to the causes that often lead to married misery. Kapālkuṇḍalā's life was unhappy because she did not love her husband. Śaibalinī at first did not feel anything akin to love for Candraśekhar. Baṅkimcandra has given certain instances of mixed marriages. Hemcandra's father was an enemy of Buddhism, while Mṛṇālinī's father was a Buddhist. That fact did not stand in the way of their marriage, but still the marriage had to be kept a secret. Social disparities often cause troubles and stand as barriers against happy married life as in the case of Kulīn Manoramā and Srotriya Paśupati. Baṅkimcandra looked with disfavour upon anything that might disrupt the foundations of society and that was the reason why he did not favour widow remarriage, though he had sympathy for the young widow. But he was definitely opposed to evils like child-marriage.(2) Therefore some of his heroines were made to wait for the men they loved.

Baṅkimcandra's men can be grouped as heroes, lovers, idealists, thinkers, scholars, though the divisions overlap occasionally. He made his conception of the relation between literature and morality clear in one of his essays:

(1) Pt. I, Ch. VIII.

(2) Collected Works, Vol. II, p. 676-77.

"Poets are the teachers of the world, but they do not teach by propounding morality." (1) Here by poets he meant literary artists in general. In the portrayal of his men these ideals actuated him and he laid stress on qualities like honesty, sincerity, strength of character and steadfastness of purpose. Although he has exalted physical prowess, to him moral force was superior to mere physical strength.(2) Bīrendra would not purchase his freedom at the price of his independence. Pratāp died fighting bravely, but what raises him in our estimation as a man is not his skill with weapons but his strength of mind. Amarnāth did not find in life the happiness that was his due, but his sacrifice of his own happiness for the sake of one, whom he had once loved, makes him superior to many of those who win battles.

Bańkimcandra was not fond of weak men, who loll in luxury and lead a life of ease and comfort. He believed in work, in action which meant more to him than meditation or silent thinking. He held the ideal of the "anāsakta karma" of the Gītā rather than the ideal of renunciation or asceticism. Therefore even after they had taken the vows of ascetic life Abhirām and Rāmānanda engaged in affairs in which they could be of help to others. They did not seek deliverance from the bonds of life by becoming ascetics. It

(1) Collected Works, Vol. 1, p. 783.

(2) Cf. Bibidha Prabandha, p. 150.

was by serving others that they sought their salvation.(1) In one of his essays, Bańkimcandra says that there are two types of people - those that are inclined to the sensual and those that are inclined to the spiritual. Both were wrong in his opinion.(2) But the life of a sannyasi was in some cases the inevitable consequence of the career of men who were failures in life. Gobindalāl became a sannyasi. Nagendranāth wanted to retire from the life of a householder when sick of the world. He was thus shirking his duty. Out of pity for these weak characters Bańkimcandra prescribed such a life for them.

A question that often confronts serious students of the novels of Bańkimcandra is, "Why are some of his men such miserable failures?" He had no word of praise for the idle, inactive, ease-loving, ambitionless Bengali, the product of climatic conditions in Bengal.(3) Yes, it was with this material that he had to people some of his works. He had no admiration for sentimental heroes like Rāma in Bhababhūti's Uttararāmacarita, Rāma who gives vent to feelings which more befit a worthless young man newly fallen in love.(4) Nabakumār, Nagendranāth, Jībānanda, Sītārām belong to this type of

(1) Collected Works, Krsnacaritra, Pt. 1, p. 123 for Bańkimcandra's conception of an ideal character.
(2) Collected Works, Vol. 1. p. 790.
(3) Ibid - Vol. 1. p. 792.
(4) Ibid - Vol. 1. p. 765, p. 767.

character. Better and more successful delineations are those of Jagat, Rājsiṁha, Mahendra, Brajeśvar, Candraśekhar. One of the reasons why some of his men were unsuccessful was that the living types before Baṅkimcandra were regarded by him as poor. He lived in stirring times in the intellectual history of Bengal. Did he not find in the life of his days sufficient materials for convincing men-characters in his novels? He himself said that literature is the reflection of national character.(1) It is very likely that he saw too many weaknesses and shortcomings in his contemporaries.

To him the Bengalis were a class of people, who had learntcraftiness from the fox, sycophancy and love of begging from the dog, cowardice from the sheep, imitativeness from the monkey and noisiness from the ass.(2) The author who wrote, "He who is a Christian to the Missionary, a Brahma to Keśabcandra, a Hindu to his father and an atheist to a beggar-Brāhman, is a Babu. He who drinks water at home, wine at a friend's house, is abused at a publicwoman's residence and receives a push by the neck from his European master, is a Babu. He who hates oil at his bath, his own fingers at meals and his mother-tongue during conversation is a Babu"(3), could not possibly depict many successful men as his opinions

(1) Collected Works, Vol. 1. p. 791.
(2) Ibid - Vol. 1. p. 802.
(3) Ibid - Vol. 11. p. 690.

about the people he saw around his were far from high.

Rabīndranāth is right in thinking that Bańkimcandra has been most successful where he has portrayed the modern Bengali. (1) In depicting characters of his own rank as Bańkimcandra did in those novels where modern Bengali life is the subject-matter he could draw from a finished model. Rabīndranāth further says that where Bańkimcandra tried to picture the old type he has had to invent a great deal. A novelist has the advantage of imagination in supplying the leading features of characters belonging to classes and times other than his own. But Bańkimcandra himself says that the human heart remains the same in every country and age. (2) Some of his characters do not belong to any typical time. The same is true of other great writers also. Shakespeare's characters are not typically Elizabethan, nor are some of the characters in Rabīndranāth's novels typical representatives of modern Bengali life.

Bańkimcandra did not create many good [illegible] caricatures. The best examples are Gajapati, Tārācaran, Hīrālāl Debendra, the village post-master in Kṛṣṇakānter Vil, henpecked Rāmsaday, Rāmrām's elderly wife, but some of those are very incomplete sketches. They are not enduring characters like

(1) Modern Review, January 1917, p. 4.

(2) Collected Works, Vol. 1. p. 869.

Mrs. Gamp, Micawber, Pickwick and Mr. Collins. Bankimcandra lacked what is known as "fantastic humour" and what Dickens had in plenty. (1)

(1) Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XIII. p. 338.

He had his villians but they are not devilish creatures like Iago, Fagin and Bill Sykes. He could not create an unscrupulous adventuress like Becky Sharp. Though Rohiṇī is something of an adventuress she is inferior to Becky. Neither was Baṅkimcandra able to depict military adventurers like Quentin Durward of Akṣaykumār Datta and Īśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar was not at all into suited to prose-fiction. It is fortunate that Baṅkimcandra far and did not take as a model the prose style of Īśvarcandra Gupta another under whose influence he came in early life. Pyārīcād and of the Kālīprasanna had, it is true, written in a more colloquial style activi but they did not command a big following. Moreover Baṅkimcandra considered the style of Hutom Pyāṅcā poor and the style of Ālāl

In discussing Baṅkimcandra's style, we have to bear in mind that before his time the learned, pedantic and verbose style was in vogue. Longwinded sentences some of which occupy as much as half a page were common in the writings of Rāmmohun Rāy and Śrīrāmpur Missionaries like Tattvabodhinī Patrikā. The style of Akṣaykumār Datta and Īśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar was not at all suited to prose-fiction. It is fortunate that Baṅkimcandra did not take as a model the prose style of Īśvarcandra Gupta under whose influence he came in early life. Pyārīcād and Kālīprasanna had, it is true, written in a more colloquial style but they did not command a big following. Moreover Baṅkimcandra considered the style of Hutom Pyāṅcā poor and the style of Ālāl

inappropriate for serious and dignified subjects. He was of opinion that the chief qualities required in good style are simplicity and clarity, but if the colloquial style did not for any reason serve one's purpose, there was no harm in taking recourse to a more difficult style.(1) Therefore he adopted a middle course. In his writings there is a combination of the learned and the simpler styles. But he did not fully escape the influence of earlier writers. The opening chapter of Bangadarshan is classical in tone:

"এই বঙ্গদেশের নিদাঘকালে কখনো কখনো অত্যন্ত গুরুতর বিষ্ণুপুর বহিতে থাকে। বিষ্ণুপুর বহিতে থাকার নাম কলিকাতা যাইতে দিতেছি। নিদাঘকালে অত্যন্ত সমুদ্রোপযোগী নৌকা অত্যন্ত দুর্লভ বোধে অন্য সন্ধান করিতে লাগিলাম। দেখিলাম, সম্মুখে পূজার ছুটি আসিতেছে; কলিকাতা হইতে অনেকগুলি প্রবাসী বাঙ্গালি বাটী আসিতেছেন; তাহা হইতে কাহারো নিকট হইতে কোনো-না-কোনো উপায়ে হইতে হইবে। পূজার সময় বহিতে না বহিতেই সমুদ্যাত্রা করিব; কিন্তু নৌকা সমস্ত নীল নীল সাদায় আবৃত বহিতে লাগিল। নৌকারোহণে কত দেখিবার সম্ভাবনা ছিল, তাহা বহিতে লাগিল। পাছে কেবল বিলাতী প্রমাণিত আর সেকর মতো চলিতে লাগিলেন।"

(1) Collected Works, Vol. II, p. 670.

Throughout this novel and in fact his other earlier novels there are innumerable borrowings from Sanskrit, especially in the purely descriptive parts. But even when the scenes are not descriptive, he adopted a style which is not at all simple. This is noticed in Āyeshā's open avowal of her love for Jagat in the prison:

" আয়েশা খুরধার লিখিতে লাগিলেন,—" শুন ওসমান, আবার বলি, এই কথা আমার প্রাণেশ্বর- যাবজ্জীবন- এর নহে- আমার হৃদয়ে মুছন পাইবে না-। জেল ভূমি- বধ্যভূমি- ইহার (শোনিতে আর্দ্র হয় —" বলিতে বলিতে আয়েষা শিহরিয়া উঠিলেন —" তথাপি দেহের সহিত মনিরে ইহার মূর্ত্তি প্রতিষ্ঠা করিয়া অন্তর্যামী সহিত আরাধনা করিব-। কয়ে মুহূর্ত্তের পর দেহ আর ভিতরে ইহার সঙ্গে থেকে না হয়; কেলাদেহ হইতে মুক্ত হইয়া শত সহস্রার মধ্যে বসুন্ধরা- হন, আমার পাপ বিচ্ছেদের ভোগ, তথাপি আমি- ইহার প্রেমকাঙ্ক্ষিণী- দাসী- রহিব"(1)

Surely people in a tense situation do not talk in that way. The same is true of Kapālkundalā where Lati Bibi tells

(1) Durgeśnandinī, Pt. II, Ch. XV.

Nabakumār that she is Padmābatī:

"নবকুমার চলিলেন, মুহূর্ত্তমধ্যে চলিয়া গেলেন মাত্র, মহিলা মুৎফল-উন্নিসা- যাদুমন্ত্রমুগ্ধের ন্যায় তাঁহার পশ্চাৎ পশ্চাৎ চলিলেন। কাপালিকের চরণ যুগল বক্ষে ধরিয়া কোরস্থানে পড়িলেন-, " নিষ্ঠুর! আমি তোমার জন্য অনন্তের নিষ্ঠুরতা ত্যাগ করিয়া আসিয়াছি। তুমি আমায় ত্যাগ করিও না।" নবকুমার- কহিলেন, "তুমি- আমার অপ্রাপ্ত- শিক্ষার যাও-; আমার আশা ত্যাগ কর-।"

"বিলম্ব নহে-।" মুৎফল-উন্নিসা- ধীরবৎ দাঁড়াইয়া উত্তর করিলেন-; "কপাল তোমার আশা পূরিবে না-।" মস্তক উন্নত- করিয়া, নেত্র বঙ্কিম- গ্রীবাভঙ্গী- করিয়া, নবকুমার মুখ প্রতি অনিমিষে -তাকাইয়া- মুগ্ধিত- করিয়া, রাজরাজ্ঞী মোহিনী- দাঁড়াইলেন। যে অনবমনীয় সব আশাসুত্র গড়িয়া- তিলোত্তমা, আবার তাহার জ্যোতি- মুছিল; যে অতুল মানসিক শক্তি- তাহে আজ মহান কল্পনায় ভীত- হয়নাই, সেই মাটি আবার- ধূলায় লুণ্ঠিত- হইল। নলাম পরে বিমনী-সকল মুক্তি- হইয়া রহিল কেশ- দিল; জ্যোতির্ম্ময় চক্ষু- রবিকর মুখরিত মুক্তি- করিয়া- বহ্নি- ঝলসিত- লাগিল; নাসারন্ধ্র ফুলিতে- লাগিল। প্রাণোৎসর্জিনী- রূপ- ধরি- যেমন- সতি- বিরোধীর প্রতি- শ্রীবাভঙ্গী- করিয়া দাঁড়ায়, দলিত- ফণী- জননী- যেমন ফণা- তুলিয়া দাঁড়ায়, তেমনি উন্মাদিনী- রমণী- মস্তক তুলিয়া দাঁড়াইলেন। কহিলেন, "এ বন্ধন না, তুমি- আমারই হইবে।" (1)

(1) Kapālkuṇḍalā, Pt. III, Ch. VI.

From the time of the appearance of Bisabṛkṣa onwards a change in Bankimcandra's style is noticed. The language becomes more easy and natural. There is a distinct tendency towards the avoidance of conceits and metaphors. The descriptive parts are in chaste and elegant language and there is no unnecessary piling up of compounds. There is no pompous and heavy air as the paragraphs follow one another. The monotony in style of some of the earlier novels is entirely absent. There is more directness and simplicity than is found in the first few novels. In Indirā a simple and homely style is used as the story is narrated in the first person by the heroine herself:

"কুসুম মুখে কোমল-মাংস-লেহন করিয়া ক্ষুধা নিবৃত্তি করিলাম। তার পর সেই কদলী-পত্রে হস্ত মুখ মার্জ্জন করিয়া, সেই পত্রে অবশিষ্ট ফলগুলি বাঁধিয়া লইলাম। তার পর সেই পুষ্করিণীর জলে তৃষ্ণা নিবারণ করিলাম। তার পর সেই পুষ্করিণীর তীরে বসিয়া, সেই ফলগুলি খাইলাম। তার পর সেই পুষ্করিণীর তীরে বসিয়া, সেই ফলগুলি খাইলাম। তার পর সেই পুষ্করিণীর তীরে বসিয়া, সেই ফলগুলি খাইলাম।" (1)

(1) Chapter VI.

In process of time the style of Bankimcandra underwent certain changes and this is clearly seen in his descriptions of external objects. A comparison of the opening of Mṛṇālinī with the description of the river bathed in moonlight in Debī Caudhurāṇī would be a very good illustration on the point:

" ঝঞ্ঝাময় প্রাবৃট্‌কালীন, সন্ধ্যা যমুনা = সন্ধ্যাকালে যমুনার অত্যন্ত প্রাবৃট্ = দিনান্ত কালীন ঝঞ্ঝা প্রবাহিত হইতেছিল। প্রাবৃট্‌কাল, কিন্তু মেঘমালাই; অথচ যে স্থান আছে, তাহা শূন্যময় তরঙ্গমালাকুল সলিলময় সকলি বিরল দেখাইতেছিল। সূর্য্য সেই সময়ে অস্তে গমন করিতেছিলেন। বর্ষার ঘনঘটাকে সন্ধ্যা যমুনা উজ্জ্বল করিয়া, সেকালের পরিচ্ছদভূষণ উন্মাদিনী, সেই দুই ভামিনী, কীয়ৎক্ষণ পরস্পরে আলিঙ্গন করিতেছিল। চঞ্চলে কমনীয়ত্বসম্পাদন করিয়া সকল কাঁদিতে হইয়া দুইজন প্রতিঘাত করিতেছিল।"

Compare this with the following extract from Debī Caudhurāṇī:

" বর্ষা কাল। কাল্পি বোয়েসা। যমুনা ঢ় উচ্ছল নয়, নড় ঘড়ুর, তরঙ্গকার ক্ষমা। — চন্দ্রিমাঃ সমুদয় আবরণের মত। নিস্তব্ধা নদী। কদাচিৎ দুই একটি নৌকা দূরে দূরান্তে দেখা যাইতেছে। চন্দ্রের কিরণ সেই শান্তি নদীজলের উপর ঠিকরে — প্রশান্ত, অনন্ত, সেখানে স্থানে স্থানে ক্ষুদ্র তরঙ্গ ক্ষুদ্রিলিতাঙ্গ। সেখানে কেবল কেবল কেবল

[illegible]

Bankimcandra followed some of the literary conventions which formed part of the usual stock-in-trade of older Bengali writers. The descriptions of the arrival of Prophulla as a bride and the women's gathering in Indira are two of the best examples of the handling of the conventional style in his novels. In his descriptions of feminine beauty also, he was conventional to some extent in his earlier novels. He was rather diffuse in his descriptions of Āyeśā, Tilottamā, Manoramā and Matī Bibi.(2) But gradually he eschewed this elaborate process which he had imbibed from the study of Sanskrit and substituted brief descriptions instead and was very sparing with words while speaking of Kunda, Nalinī, Śrī, Rama, Rajanī and Sāgar. The contrast with his earlier style is easily noticed in such

(1) Debī Caudhurāṇī, Pt. II, Ch. III.

(2) Cf. Tārakmāth's hits at Bankimcandra in Svarṇalatā, Ch. VI.

cases. It is no longer the style of Kapāl undalā or Kṛṇālinī.

Bankimcandra tried to write now and then colloquial Bengali, but there is here a considerable mixture of the colloquial and the literary forms. It is, of course, vain to expect in him that thorough-going colloquial style for purposes of narration and description such as we find in modern Bengali writers under the influence of Rabīndranāth. Even Pyārīcād himself mixed up the colloquial and the literary in the conversational parts of Ālāler Gharer Dulāl and used words like [illegible] on the one hand, and [illegible] on the other, while the same person is talking.(1)

Bankimcandra has made some attempts to make some of his characters talk in the colloquial style. But even in this he is not consistent and one gets the queerest jumble of literary and colloquial forms e.g., [illegible] on the one hand, and [illegible] on the other, in the same passage.(2) His habit of writing the literary form breaks through even his reported conversation. It is only the lighter type of conversation that is done in the colloquial, but where the subject is heroic or serious or where the person is of importance, the style is as literary

(1) p. 97.

(2) Bisabrikṣa, Ch. XX.

as it is in the descriptions. Bankimcandra was afraid to let himself go for fear of being thought low class, and was continually mixing up the colloquial and the literary in a way that is sometimes ludicrous. The result is a colloquial style which is never spoken or used in any part of Bengal.

We may turn now to Bankimcandra's management of the plots of his novels. A plot has been described as "the chain of events in a story and the principles which knit it together." (1) The plot "is the novel in its intellectual aspect", says another critic. (2) Professor Elton says, "The story is the narrative as it moves on, and holds us, from point to point. The plot is the narrative, in its entire web, as we look back upon it." (3) Bankimcandra generally divided his novels into several parts ranging from two as in the case of Durgeśnandinī and Kṛṣṇakānter Uil to eight as in the case of Rājsiṁha. This he did in order to preserve a coherence in the plot and not to lose a sense of proportion. But there are some novels in which the story runs merely through different chapters and is not divided into parts at all.

The technique of a novelist requires that he should be economical in plot-construction and the plot should be carefully wound up. Unless this is done, there is a feebleness at the end of the story and it is marred by a sense of dullness. Both in Kṛṣṇakānter Uil and Sītārām

(1) E. Muir - The Structure of the Novel, p. 16.

(2) E.M.Forster-Aspects of the Novel, p. 129.

(3) Sir Walter Scott, pp. 64-65.

Bankimcandra added appendices and this surely was not an artistic way of concluding a story. The plot of Krsnakanter Uil would not have suffered in the least from the disappearance of Gobindalal and in Sitaram the readers ought to have been left to guess about the fate of the hero instead of the local gossip that Bankimcandra indulged in.

Stevenson laid down a rather hard rule for the novelist and the story-teller: "The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer to one another like notes in music." (1) This means that the plot should be artistically compact. Sometimes useless length spoils the plot. The fault of the first part of Debi Caudhurani is that it is too long. The whole thing could have been condensed within a shorter space. The entire episode about the intrigues in Agra and Delhi in Kapalkundala might have been considerably shortened. The intrigues have little to do with the main plot, but the novelist quite unnecessarily devotes several chapters to this part. In Candrasekhar again, one whole part is allotted to the depiction of the mental and physical agonies of Saibalini. The fact

(1) Memories and Portraits, p. 242.

that many of Bankimcandra's novels first appeared in a serial form may have tempted him to drag them out to an unnecessary length. He himself felt it necessary to rewrite some of his novels after they had been published in a serial form and in others he made considerable alterations. It may be said that Tolstoy's War and Peace or Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga are long novels. But they are chronicle novels and therefore stand on an altogether different plane.

In some of his novels Bankimcandra set himself to please his readers by a happy ending of the story and in trying to do so he sometimes spoiled the beauty of the plot. The plot of Mṛṇāliṇī is rather thin and only the depiction of some of the characters redeems it from being mediocre. The plot of Rajanī is somewhat sordid. Labangalatā's character loses its charm because the novelist was intent on seeing Rajanī married to Śacīndra and so he made Labange play upon Amarnāth's early love for her. In Debī Caudhurāṇī Bankimcandra had to reunite Praphulla to her husband inspite of her years of leadership of Bhabānī Pāthak's gang of robbers. There is a sense of making too much fuss which ultimately leads to nothing. The propagandist made the novelist ineffectual.

It is really in the handling of the tragic plot that Bankimcandra showed most skill. The tragedies

of Āyeṣā and Osmān, of Kunda and Negendra, the tragedy of Zebunnisa and Mabārak, of Sītārām and Śrī, the tragedy of Bhramar and Gobindalāl, appealed more to the novelist's imagination than those themes to which he could give a happy ending. He made Nagendranāth and Sūryamukhī happy at last. But at what cost? Kunda had to kill herself and Sūryamukhī had to suffer intensely. Bańkimcandra made Śaibalinī go back to Candraśekhar. But it was a merely patched up affair. The novelist had to enlist the aid of the yogas or psychic force in making Śaibalinī love her husband. It was certainly not a normal course. The novelist shows much more skill in Kapālkuṇḍalā where the heroine is not in love with the man to whom she was married. They could not continue to live in that way for a long time and the inevitable crash came. There is a definite reason why Bańkimcandra preferred a tragic plot above others. He thought that the best qualities in human nature showed themselves when a person was placed in unhappy circumstances.(1) So to him Desdemona was a greater character than either Śakuntalā or Miranda.(2)

In Bańkimcandra's art as a novelist there are

(1) Bibidha Prabandha, p. 135.

(2) Ibid - Śakuntalā, Mirāndā ebaṁ Desdemonā.

certain other factors which have to be taken into consideration. He introduced political events to enhance the complexity of some of his plots. Mṛṇālinī's fate is bound up with the ambitious schemes of Mādhabācārya. Dalanī and Saibalinī are entangled in the same political events. Śānti's married life is wholly bound up with the activities of the Santāns. Kalyānī also was pushed into the same environment and for a time was separated from her husband and daughter. The Rājput-Mughul wars delayed Cañcal's marriage. Tilottamā and Jagat could not be happy until the Mughuls and Pathāns had come to terms.

Bankimcandra was equally clever in creating complex situations by ordinary events, like Dalanī going to Pratāp's house for shelter and Brajeśvar meeting Praphulla after years. A novelist can from such common incidents create something, which is of considerable importance in his plots. He has, on the other hand, to adopt at times certain distinctly laid out plans like Śānti disguising herself as a man and going to the Math,' Debī Caudhurānī ordering her men to transfer Braja forcibly to her boat. Such artifices are sometimes necessary though they may appear quite unnatural to ordinary observers. In the matter of clearing up the complications in the plots, Bankimcandra repeated a merely

mechanical device as has already been seen in those cases where unfortunate circumstances gave rise to doubts regardi the virtue of some of his women. The use of letters in th novels was another device to lend an additional charm to th plot as well as to create complexity in it sometimes. Dalani letter to Gurgan was responsible for her misfortunes. Bhrama letter to her husband created trouble for both of them. But Bibi's letter introduced a new element in Kapālkundalā's life. Another characteristic of Bankimcandra's novels was his fondness for providing most of his women with companions or confidents, whose actions heighten the interest of the plot and often create new situations. Bimalā played the more active part in Durgeśnandinī, while Tilottamā was more or les silent.

According to modern standards of classificatio the novels of Bankimcandra may be classified as novels of character, novels of action and dramatic novels. In all these categories the plot has a distinct role - in some principal and in some secondary. In modern Bengali novels the plot does not play an important part as many of these are full of ideas and questionings. In Rabīndranāth's Gorā or Śaratcandra's Śrīkānta the plot is so slender that it is merely a peg to hang the novelist's ideas on. The plot is a

medley of detached events. Bankimcandra wrote years before many of these ideas were in the air and his pre-eminence over modern Bengali novelists in the matter of plot-construction will readily be acknowledged. Judged on the whole his novels furnish coherent plots, unity in the story and are true to the facts of life, though as a novelist he was a pioneer.

Bankimchandra's influence on Bengali life and literature has been far-reaching. In the novels of Rameścandra Datta, Dāmodar Mukhopādhyāy, Rābīndranāth Ṭhākur, Manmohan Basu, Candīcaraṇ Sen, Svarṇakumārī Debī, Śailoścandra Majumdār and in the writings of Akṣaycandra Sarkār, Candraśekhar Mukhopādhyāy, Nabīncandra Sen and a host of others in the last century and in recent times in the historical novels of Haraprasād Śāstrī and Rākhāldās Bandyopādhyāy, one finds the literary influence of Bankimcandra. It would not be too much to say that every Bengali novelist in the second half of the nineteenth century was in a sense his disciple. His versatility enabled him to make his mark felt in more than one branch of Bengali literature and Bengali thought. He introduced serious literary journalism and criticism and the high standards that he maintained therein should still serve as lessons to those who desire to win laurels in these branches of literature. He first taught the Bengalis the vast possibilities of Bengali literature by his own novels and miscellaneous works and gave an impetus

to the cultivation of belles lettres in Bengal. He made it possible for educated Bengalis to realise that their life and literature were inseparably bound up, the one with the other. He suggested to them the idea of applying themselves to the improvement of literature if they wanted to achieve anything in the way of national progress. In that respect he was a nation-builder.

He dominated an age by the sheer strength of his outstanding genius and forceful personality, and his contemporaries looked up to him as one who set new fashions, as one whose opinions carried considerable weight, as one who should be imitated in his literary methods, as one whose works served as models and standards of excellence. Rabīndranāth maintains that he is still living in the age of Bankimcandra.(1) One section of modern Bengali novelists specially a group of women writers draw their inspiration from him. His popularity remains unimpaired inspite of the futile attempts of charlatans and upstarts to relegate him to obscurity.

The Bengali Novel in Bankimcandra's hands assumed a fully developed form. His novels were neither imitations of Arabian or Persian tales, nor of the tales of classical Indian writers like Visnusarmā, Somadeva Bhatta,

(1) Prabāsī, Vol. XXX, Pt. I, p. 60; Bicitrā, Phālgun, 1336 B.Y.

Bāṇa, Dandin and Subandhu. Bańkimcandra's novels certainly have more affinity with the works of European novelists like Scott, Dumas, Hugo and Lytton. Bańkimcandra infused fresh life and breath into forgotten periods of history and made them live again. He created a new interest in old forgotten things and gave an incentive to the reconsideration of periods of history, which had till then no substantial meaning for the reading-public in Bengal. To the modern world his historical novels bring a glimpse of the distant past. Out of the dry bones of history he created men and women, many of whom people now love to recognise as their own kith and kin. But he was not simply content with writing of the past. The sphere of his imagination was not restricted to a narrow circle; he was not oblivious of the currents and crosscurrents of life arround him. Those permanent traits of human nature, which are found in all ages and all climes were the principal material of his novels.

Though essentially a man of his time, he did not find his sole subject matter in the short comings and weaknesses of his contemporaries. Like Thackeray he did not allow himself to be obsessed by Vanity Fair, nor did the social iniquities of his time engage his chief

attention as they did in the case of Dickens. The darkest corners of the human mind found in him a keen observer, though he was not like Dostoievesky primarily concerned with the psychology of crime. Science attracted him, but he discussed no scientific theories in his novels. He did not attempt to portray anything in the nature of a Utopia since life in his days was less complicated and full of problems that it is now. The sombre tragedy of human life attracted him, but the helplessness of man struggling against fate did not deaden his feelings. He could see the "eternal spirit of the chainless mind" rising above the dull drudgery of human life and be happy in the faith that this indomitable spirit would conquer where the frail flesh often failed.

His lofty idealism never allowed him to play for cheap popularity or tawdry fame. A stern and uncompromising fighter, he worked against heavy odds, but difficulties did not deter him nor could discouragement chill his unbounded enthusiasm, or embitter his feelings. To-day in Bengali literature there are many repercussions of the thoughts and ideas of the West; problems that vitally affect life, many new ways of looking at things are engaging the attention of our best minds. At such a time it is fitting

that we men of the new age acknowledge our vast debt to him, who enlarged the horizon of Bengali literature, enriched the language, and opened a new vista not only for his contemporaries, but also for future generations.

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Western Influence on the Poetry of Madhusūdan Datta

By Jayanta Kumar Dasgupta Ph. D., 1933

THE influence of Western literature is evident in all Madhusūdan's work, but particularly in the *Meghanāda Badha Kāvya* (1861) —an epoch-making poem, upon which his fame as a poet mainly rests. For the subject-matter of this poem he went to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Why was this ? Was it in imitation of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, or was it his love of Kṛittibāsa that led him to the *Rāmāyaṇa* ? Perhaps it was none of these, but his reading of Homer and other poets of Europe which led him to choose a story from the classics of his own country. In a letter to Rājnārayaṇ Basu, he wrote, " As for me, I never read any poetry except that of Vālmīkī, Homer, Vyāsa, Virgil, Kālidāsa, Dante (in translation), Tasso (do.), and Milton." Though the theme was Indian, his models evidently were the epics of Europe—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, the *Æneid* of Virgil, Dante's *Comedia*, the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso, and the *Paradise Lost* of Milton. To Rājnārāyaṇ Basu he wrote while engaged in composing this work, " In the present poem, I mean to give free scope to my inventing Powers (such as they are) and to borrow as little as I can from Vālmīki . . . I shall not borrow Greek stories, but write, rather try to write, as a Greek would have done." To the same friend he confided, " By the bye, if the father of our Poetry had given Ram human companions, I could have made a regular Iliad of the death of Meghnad." [1] The very epic form was a thoroughly new introduction in Bengali. This was the first original epic poem. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* in Bengali were mere translations.

While the Indian poets generally begin their works from the beginning of things, Madhusūdan follows the Western practice of suddenly plunging into the action of the poem. The first canto opens with the death of Vīrabāhu, one of the sons of Rāvaṇa, the Rākṣasa king of Laṅkā. The *Iliad* opens with an account of the pestilence in the Grecian camps and the wrath of Achilles over the ownership of a captive-girl. The *Odyssey* begins with the descent of Athene in Ithaca after Odysseus had been enthralled for seven years in the island

[1] Letter dated 14th July, 1860.

of Circe. The *Æneid* opens with the storm raised by Æolus which overtook the Trojans flying from the wreck of Troy under Æneas and sailing for Italy. The first canto of Tasso's epic dealing with the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre finds God sending the angel Gabriel to Godfrey and ordering him to assemble the chiefs of the Crusaders and march to Jerusalem, although six years had passed since the Christians had landed in the Holy Land. The first book of *Paradise Lost* opens with the hosts of Satan fallen in Hell as a punishment for their rebellion against God.

While the general practice in Sanskrit and the older vernacular literatures of India is to begin a poem with a prayer to some god like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, or Śiva, Madhusūdan after the model of Western poets begins with a hymn to Sarasvatī, the Hindu goddess of learning. The Western practice is to offer invocations to the Muses. Of course, this custom of worshipping one's favourite god or goddess was a conventional device with Indian poets and was known as the "Iṣṭa Upāsanā Niyama" (cf. Kālidāsa invoking Pārvatī and Parameśvara in the Raghu Vaṁsa). But Madhusūdan was no believer in the generally accepted mythology of the Hindus. So he started off with an invocation to Sarasvatī as the least offensive to his own tastes and beliefs. These lines rendered into English prose are :—

> "When the great hero, Vīrabāhu fell in open warfare and went to the abode of Yama untimely, tell me, O goddess, whose words are like nectar, whom did the Rākṣasa king, enemy of Rāghava, install as the commander of his army and send to the battle ? How was the fear of Indra set at rest by the lover of Ūrmilā, who killed Indrajit, Meghnād the unconquerable ? Saluting your lotus feet, humble as I am I again call upon you, having white arms," etc.

These lines can be fittingly compared with the opening of other famous epics of the world, and one is struck immediately with the remarkable similarity. Thus begins Homer :—

> "Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing O Muse." [1]

In the same strain Homer begins his *Odyssey* :—

> "The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd
> Long exercised in woes, O Muse resound." [2]

Milton begins his *Paradise Lost* in the following way :—

> "Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree . . .
> Sing, Heavenly Muse."

[1] *The Iliad*, tr. by the Earl of Derby.
[2] The *Odyssey*, tr. by Alexander Pope.

Virgil and Tasso also invoke the Muse in the beginning of the *Æneid* and *Jerusalem Delivered* respectively. Camoens begins the *Lusiad* with an invocation to the Muses of the Tagus. Following closely upon foreign models the Bengali poet begins his narrative when a great deal of action had already taken place.

The uproar is so great and tumultuous in the sea-girt kingdom that even the denizens of the sea are disturbed and the consort of the sea-god Varuṇa asks her maid-of-honour if any storm is imminent due to the anger of her husband. In Indian mythology there is no Vāruṇī.[1] She is obviously Thetis of the *Iliad* and there is even in her a touch of Milton's Sabrina, the nymph in *Comus*. The sea-god himself is drawn after Nereus of the Greek pantheon. The god of the winds reminds one of Æolus in Virgil, who " from his imperial throne, with power imperial, curbs the struggling winds and sounding tempests in dark prison binds ". The imagery in Madhusūdan's poem is similar to the idea in Virgil when Vāruṇī says : " Fie on the god of winds. How has he forgotten his promise so soon, dear friend ? At the court of the king of the gods the other day, I requested him to chain the winds, to imprison all."

The pleasure-garden of Indrajit seems to have been suggested to the poet by Armida's Paradise in *Jerusalem Delivered*,[2] where the deserter-knight Rinaldo is held in bondage by the enchantress Armida. Here Indrajit moves in a brilliant circle of beautiful women amidst luxurious surroundings, oblivious of the great fight that is going on, and the guardian-goddess of the kingdom in the guise of his nurse has to remind him of his duty. In Tasso's work, Charles and Abaldo go in search of Rinaldo.[3] Indrajit tears off his garland in rage and prepares himself to avenge the death of his brother. Rinaldo tore " the rich embroidered ornaments he wore ".[4]

The farewell of Indrajit and his wife Pramīlā recalls Armida's mock sorrow and pretended grief for Rinaldo.[5] But while in the Bengali poem the feelings are genuine, the enchantress in the Italian

[1] Madhusūdan wrote to Rājnārayaṇ : " The name is Varunani, but I have turned out one syllable. To my ears this word is not so musical as Varuni, and I don't know why I should bother myself about Sanskrit rules." (Letter dated 3rd August, 1860.) Chitrāṅgadā is a new conception. She is barely mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa.

[2] *Jerusalem Delivered*, canto xvi.

[3] Ibid., canto xv.

[4] Ibid., canto xv, stanzas 34, 35.

[5] Ibid., canto xvi, stanza 40.

poem is sorry simply because her conquest is undone. A better comparison would be the grief of Andromache at the departure of Hector before his fight with Achilles.

The second canto opens with a description of evening: "The fragrant winds blew in all directions, asking each other in a whisper, 'what riches have you gained by kissing which flowers?'" This description has a peculiar interest of its own. The author wrote to Rājnārayaṇ Basu, "These lines will no doubt recall to your mind the lines

> 'And whisper whence they stole
> These balmy spoils,'

of Milton and the lines

> '. . . Like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour,'

of Shakespeare." And the poet added, "Is not kissing a more romantic way of getting the thing than stealing?" A more appropriate comparison would be the description of evening in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost* and the lines, "When Zephyr upon Flora breathes," etc., in *L'Allegro*.

Madhusūdan obviously was referring to this part of the poem when he wrote to the same friend: "As a reader of the Homeric *Epos*, you will, no doubt, be reminded of the Fourteenth Iliad, and I am not ashamed to say that I have intentionally imitated it—Juno's visit to Jupiter on Mount Ida. I only hope I have given the Episode as thorough a Hindu air as possible." Durgā's visit to Śiva while he is in meditation has a parallel in Juno going to Jupiter on Mount Ida. Śiva says to Pārvatī that nobody, be he mortal or god, can evade destiny. This "Prāktan" or fate is the same as "the voice of destiny" in Homer. This might have been due to the common origin of the myths of the ancient races which must not be confused with literature. This is a classic belief, and the reason may be the similarity of early beliefs. At the bidding of Indra, his charioteer goes to Laṅkā with the weapon with which Lakṣmaṇa will kill Indrajit. Lest seeing him in his kingdom, Rāvana should pick a quarrel with him, Indra commands Prabhanjaṇa, the Indian god of winds, to raise a storm, and this description is a direct imitation of Virgil.[1] In the *Lusiad*, Neptune orders Æolus to let loose the winds on the Portuguese fleet.

[1] *Æneid*, Bk. i, ll. 122, ff. "The raising winds rush through," etc.

The Indian goddess of love more resembles Aphrodite of the Greeks than the Ratidevī of Sanskrit poets. Madhusūdan seems to have imitated Aphrodite and Somnus in delineating Rati and Kāmadeva. They find no place in the original *Rāmāyaṇa*. Kālidāsa in *Kumāra Sambhava* (third canto) takes the help of the god of love and his wife to disturb Śiva's meditation, but Madhusūdan's sympathies were different from Kālidāsa's.

The third canto of the poem describes the feelings of Indrajit's wife Pramīlā, who arranges to meet her husband in the garb of a warrior. She is just like one of the Amazons in classical Western poetry. But it is more probable that Homer's Athene and Panthesilea, Virgil's Camilla, and Tasso's Erminia were in the mind of the poet in the presentation of this heroic maiden. Older Bengali poetry does not contain many examples of heroic women, so he surely did not go there for a model. Raṅgalāl Banerjee's heroic women may possibly have had some influence in the conception of Pramīlā.

The beginning of the fourth canto is an invocation to Vālmīki, the prince of Indian poets. Dante in the *Divine Comedy* invokes the spirit of Virgil ("Hell", canto ii). In the third book of the *Lusiad*, Camoens invokes the aid of Calliope—the Muse of epic poetry and mother of Orpheus. Madhu's line, "In a dense forest the unkind tigress rears you, villain," addressed to Lakṣmaṇa by Sītā is reminiscent of the story of Romulus and Remus who were suckled by she-wolves on wild mountains. These words bear further resemblance to stanzas in Virgil and Tasso.[1] In the course of the description of Rāvaṇa's fight with the bird-king Jaṭāyu, Sītā says that she had a vision regarding her future, which has been obviously suggested by Virgil's picture of the future of the Roman race unfolded to Æneas by his father in Hell (*Æneid*, Bk. vi).

The fifth canto is a prelude to the central idea of the poem. The goddess Māyā sends Dream in the guise of Lakṣmaṇa's mother Sumitrā to tell him to worship the goddess Chaṇḍī but forbids him to be

[1] "And wild wolves that rave
On the chill crag of some rude Appenine
Gave his youth suck."
Jerusalem Delivered.

"Not sprung from noble blood nor goddess born
But hewn from hardened entrails of a rock
And rough Hyrcanian tigers gave thee suck."
Æneid.

accompanied by any other person. These lines are reminiscent of Homer's :—

"Alone the Ilian ramparts let him leave"

and—

"Alone, no Trojan with him, must he go."[1]—

the command of Jove conveyed by Iris to Priam to seek the body of Hector.

This conception of Māyā is somewhat akin to Homer's description of Iris and to the dream of Agamemnon in the second book of the *Iliad* in which the deluding Vision stands near the Greek king in the guise of Nestor. The various obstructions and temptations that Lakṣmaṇa encounters on his way to the temple of Chaṇḍī are counterparts of the obstacles placed in the way of the two knights in *Jerusalem Delivered* who went in search of Rinaldo. The roaring lion, the beautiful damsels bathing and throwing baits to Lakṣmaṇa are exactly of the same nature.[2] A similar picture is found in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* when Sir Guyon breaks up pitilessly the Bower of Bliss.[3] The passages are wonderfully alike. The beautiful and nude women, their occupations and tempting words have been vividly reproduced in this poem. By the time that Lakṣmaṇa had finished his worship at the shrine of the goddess it was nearly dawn and Indrajit was trying to arouse his sleeping wife with words that are similar to those addressed by Adam to Eve in *Paradise Lost* (Bk. v). The last words in Madhusūdan, "My eternal delight," are exactly in the spirit of Milton's "My ever new delight".

Indrajit's mother is reluctant to let him fight. He replies, "What will my eternal grandfather, the king of the Dānavas, say when he hears of this ? . . . the world will laugh." Hector replies to his wife in the same strain :—

". . . But I should blush
To face the men and long-rob'd dames of Troy
If, like a coward, I could shun the fight."

(Book vi.)

In the sixth canto, Lakṣhmaṇa and Bibhīṣaṇa enter the chamber of sacrifice where Indrajit is worshipping. They go unseen, guarded by Māyā. In the *Iliad*, Priam goes to the Greek camp attended by Hermes and unseen to other eyes (Bk. xxiv, "Great Priam entered,

[1] *The Iliad*, Bk. xxiv.

[2] Canto xv, stanzas 50, 58 ; canto xviii. Also *Lusiad*, Bk. ix, "Island of Love."

[3] Bk. ii, canto xii.

unperceived of all"). Bibhīṣaṇa's dream of his future kingship and the words, "O! You future king of the Rākṣasas" may well be compared with the words of the witches in *Macbeth* (act i, scene iii). Indrajit sees his uncle standing near the door with a huge lance like a comet. In the second book of the *Paradise Lost* there is a similar idea regarding the belief about comets.[1] While Rāma is hesitating to send his brother to kill Indrajit, Sarasvatī speaks from the skies and asks him not to disbelieve in the divine ordinance. It is more suggestive of Athene speaking to Odysseus whenever he is in some difficulty.

The omen of the snake and the peacock which Rāma sees is suggestive of Hera's omen in the *Iliad* (Bk. xii), and that of the hawk and the dove in the *Odyssey* (Bk. xv). The Indian mind, like that of the Greeks in ancient times, was susceptible to beliefs of this kind and prone to read some meaning into every sign and symbol. Bibhīṣaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa are hidden in a mist like Æneas conveyed by Venus in a cloud to Carthage (Bk. i). In the *Odyssey*, Pallas Athene surrounds Odysseus with a mist to enable him to enter invisible the palace of king Alcinous (Bk. vii). Again, in the *Iliad*, Paris is "from the field conveyed wrapt in a misty cloud" (Bk. iii). Māyā appears before Kamalā, the guardian-goddess of Laṅkā, in the form of a Rākṣasa wife, like Athene descending in Ithaca in the shape of Mentes, king of the Taphians, to confer with Telemachus (Bk. i, *Odyssey*) or Venus meeting Æneas as a huntress.

Lakṣmaṇa's attempt to strike his unarmed adversary is a gross breach of the Hindu laws of warfare. For this, even liberal critics have found fault with him.[2] It might have been that Madhusūdan's Western predilections were responsible for this weakening of the valiant character of Lakṣmaṇa, and orthodox critics were naturally hurt because in the original *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki he fights with an armed enemy. Then why was it that the poet went against a long-cherished tradition and made Lakṣmaṇa violate the laws of Hindu warfare? The only reason that can be assigned for this is that Madhusūdan had a fondness for things Western, a necessary corollary of his Western ideas. He could not let slip this opportunity of deviating from the older ideals of his race. He was a social rebel and had sympathy for those who seemed to correspond to his own

[1] "And from his horrid hair shakes pestilence and war."

[2] Ramagati Nyayaratna, *A Discourse on Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 262.

ideas. The Rākṣasas were not necessarily non-Aryans. There were two sects among them—Yajñapanthī and Yajñaparipanthī. Rāvaṇa was a Hindu of the Śaiva school. The poet's own sympathies were with the Rākṣasas. " I hate Rāma and his rabble, the idea of Rāvaṇa elevates and kindles my imagination," he wrote to Rājnārayaṇ Basu. In his love for Rāvaṇa he might have been influenced by Milton, who had a keen sympathy for Satan. Both make other characters the central figure of their poems, but in their works those of whom the readers think as villains loom large. In his over-zealous sympathy for the Rākṣasas, Madhusūdan was a little uncharitable to Lakṣmaṇa and he failed to do full justice to his character. But we cannot blame him very much if we take into consideration his contempt for things which the orthodox section of his countrymen revered. Madhusūdan might have had in his mind Shakespeare's Achilles, in *Troilus and Cressida*, striking the unarmed Hector, though in Homer the hero is armed with his " trenchant sword " but spearless (*Iliad*, Bk. xxii). Unarmed and unprotected, Indrajit hurls everything before him at his adversary, but all is ineffective through the wiles of Māyā. The simile of the mother brushing off the mosquitoes from the slumbering infant has been borrowed from Homer where Athene turned aside the arrow aimed at Menelaus by Pandarus (Bk. iv, *Iliad*). Hector and Indrajit are alike in cursing and scorning their enemies.

In the seventh canto the fatal news of his son's death is communicated to Rāvaṇa by Śiva's attendant in the form of a Rākṣasa messenger. In a similar manner Iris conveys Zeus's message to Priam. The gods arrayed on the side of Rāma are not far different from the gods descending to fight with Zeus's permission in Homer (*Iliad*, Bk. xx). They are divinities with human emotions and human sensibilities. But Madhusūdan has here followed Vālmīki in whose works gods and demi-gods guard Lakṣmaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa falls struck down by the grief-smitten Rāvaṇa but his corpse is preserved at the intercession of Pārvatī. In the *Iliad*, the body of Hector is ransomed by Priam under Zeus's command conveyed to Achilles by his mother Thetis (Bk. xxiv). In all these details Madhusūdan seems to have closely followed his Western models with striking success.

Nearly the whole of the eighth canto is based upon the sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid* and at certain places there are influences of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is remarked by Bhola Nath Chunder, a contemporary of the poet : " Modhu has kept all the great epic authors of Europe in his view and has very successfully imitated Dante and

Milton in his description of the infernal regions. Ugolino gnawing the scalp of his enemy; the Stygian Council at Pandemonium, Sin in her formidable shape, Death wielding a dreadful dart; Night and Chaos holding eternal anarchy, have all been closely imitated. Orpheus and Ulysses revert to the mind as Rāma, accompanied by Māyā-Devi, visits our poet's Inferno." Madhusūdan himself wrote to Rājnārayaṇ, "Mr. Ram is to be conducted through Hell to his father, Daśaratha, like another Æneas."

Although the description of Hell is part of the stock-in-trade of the Hindu Purāṇas, Madhusūdan's conception of that awful region is westernized. It is doubtful if he went to any of the Purāṇas for his ideas. On the contrary there is every likelihood that his imagination was kindled by what he read in the European classics in which he felt more at ease than in the tales of Hindu mythology. Homer took Odysseus to the regions of the Shades, Virgil descended with Æneas into the underworld, Dante's journeyings through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise astounded the Middle Ages, Milton hurled Satan into the bottomless pit, "a dungeon horrible, on all sides round as one great furnace flamed," which he called Hell—the Infernal world.

Following in the footsteps of these great poets of Europe in whose works he was well read, Madhusūdan takes Rāma to his father then enjoying eternal rest in the Indian Paradise. Mainly it is the Virgilian description of the abode of the Dead, with sidelights from Dante and others. In Virgil, the Sibyl guides Æneas, in Madhusūdan, Māyā accompanies Rāma. The entrance to Hell in both Virgil and Madhusūdan is a cave. Again and again Virgil's lines recur to the reader as he proceeds with this part of *Meghanāda Badha Kāvya*. Among the many passages which seem echoes of Virgil there is one—

> "The greatest of Rāghavas proceeded, as through the dark wood the traveller goes when at night the rays of the moon enter the forest and smile. Māyā Devī walked ahead in silence,"

which seems partly a copy from Virgil.[1]

Daśaratha tells Rāma how Lakṣmaṇa can be brought back to

[1] "Obscure they went through dreary shades that led
Along the waste dominions of the dead.
Thus wander travellers in woods by night,
By the moon's doubtful and malignant light,
When Jove in dusky cloud involves the skies,
And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes."
Æneid, Bk. vi.

life as Æneas is told by his father how he should conduct himself in the future and about the future of his family. In his description of the gates of Hell, Datta has directly imitated Dante's lines :—

> " Through me you pass into the city of woe,
> Through me you pass into eternal pain,"
> " Hell," iii, tr. Cary.

words which are written in blazing letters on the iron gates of Hell.[1] Again, there is an echo of Dante in Madhusūdan's " Enter this land renouncing all desires ", while Dante says, " All hope abandon, ye who enter here ! " The conversation between " the surly boatman " in Virgil and the Sibyl and that between Māyā and the gatekeeper of Yama's realms are nearly in the same strain. The boatman is appeased with the " golden rod " brought as a present for Proserpine, the gatekeeper with Śiva's trident. For the " unnavigable lake " (Avernus) full of " steaming sulphur " in Virgil, Madhusūdan has the " great lake Raurab full of fire ". The description of the various diseases in Hell finds a good parallel in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Bk. xi, " The Lazar House," ll. 480–9). Dante has similar passages in cantos xxix and xxx of " Hell ", where he speaks of divers diseases and plagues.

The idea of a ferocious bird tearing the entrails of the sinner was probably suggested by the following lines of Virgil :—

> " A ravenous vulture in his opened side,
> Her crooked beak and cruel talons tried ;
> Still for the growing liver digged his breast."

In Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* the suffering Titan is hanging on a mount in the Caucasus while he is taunted, mocked, and reviled by hideous Furies, but in Greek mythology a vulture rips the heart of Prometheus. Madhusūdan was evidently acquainted with these stories.

The advent of Rāma in that sphere of dismal darkness, horrible stench, a place without fresh air, without flowers and trees, is welcomed by the spirits in the same way as the " gladsome ghosts in circling troops attend " Æneas and " with unwearied eyes beheld their friend " and " delight to hover near " him. Some of Rāma's Rākṣasa enemies avoid meeting him just as the Argive chiefs and Agamemnon's train fly from Æneas's " well-known face with wonted fear ", and the shade of Ajax " disdains to stay, in silence turns and sullen stalks away " (*Odyssey*, Bk. xi).

[1] " Through this path the sinner passes to the land of sorrow and to everlasting pain," Madhusūdan.

The idea of women tortured by a woman attendant in Hell seems to have been borrowed from Virgil's " Queen of Furies ", who snatches from the mouths of the Thessalian chiefs the genial feasts, and has a snake hissing from her locks.[1] Similar descriptions are found in the works of the Greek dramatists. Orestes flying from the Furies is a well-known instance. Rāma meets heroes, mighty warriors, renowned princes, whose names were once famous, now reduced to mere shades. But he misses a few whose funeral rites have not been performed yet. His guide says, " Husband of the princes of Videha, there is no entrance to this city without funeral rites." In Virgil there is a similar idea :—

" Nor dares his transport vessel cross the waves,
With such whose bones are not composed in graves."

In Dante's " Limbo " (canto iv of " Hell ") the souls of those persons whose funeral rites have not been performed wander aimlessly.

Jaṭāyu leads Rāma to his father's abode. The sacred poet " divine " Musæus shows Æneas " the shining fields " where the happy souls reside. In Kaśīrāmdās's *Mahābhārata* the dwelling-place of pious men in the land of the dead is known as the " Sanjīvan-purī ". Kavikaṅkaṇa's Chaṇḍī also refers to the same. Though the name occurs in Madhusūdan, he made changes and alterations in its description. Æneas's father lives in a flowery vale, Daśaratha worships Dharmarāja at the base of a banyan tree, and the first words they utter when they meet their sons are full of feelings of the same kind. Anchises exclaims with open arms and falling tears :—

" ' Welcome,' (he said), ' the Gods' undoubted race
O long expected, to my dear embrace
Once more it is given me to behold your face.' "

Daśaratha addresses Rāma with terms of welcome and endearment. Rāma tries to touch his father's feet but feels that his attempts are in vain. Both Æneas and Odysseus had experiences of the same kind.[2] Anticlea tells her son that she is an airy creature and Daśaratha says that he is a mere phantom.

[1] Cf. " Her snakelocks hiss ", Virgil ; " And hissing snakes for ornamental hair," Tasso ; " In her locks a deadly snake hissing," Madhusūdan.

[2] " Thrice around his neck his arms he threw ;
And thrice the flitting shadow slipped away,
Like winds, or empty dreams that fly the day."

Æneid.

" Thrice in my arms I strove her shade to bind,
Thrice through my arms she slipped like empty wind,
Or dreams the vain illusions of the mind."

Odyssey.

We now come to the concluding part of the great epic. Following Homer, Madhusūdan makes Rāvaṇa pray for an interim of seven days for performing the funeral rites of his son. Priam wanted a truce for eleven days. Rāvaṇa orders the messenger to convey the message thus :—

> " Tell the hero the king of the Rākṣasas, Rāvaṇa begs this of you—
> ' Stay in this land with your army giving up enmity. The king desires to perform duly the funeral rites of his son.' "

Rāma replies,

> " I shall not take up arms for seven days."

In Homer, Achilles says,

> " So shall it be, old Priam ; I engage
> To stay the battle for the time required."
>
> *Iliad*, Bk. XXIV.

The lament of Sītā, " My friend, wherever I go, I put out the light of happiness," is very similar to Helen's lamentations in Homer.

The funeral ceremony is partly borrowed from Homer. Those who would object to any inference of foreign influence in these descriptions would naturally argue that it is due to mere parallelism in myths—Eastern and Western, and hence, the coincidence is accidental : there is certainly a vast difference between a close parallel and an accidental coincidence. One is tempted to conclude that the Homeric influence worked more strongly upon Madhusūdan's mind than the similarity of myths. The Rākṣasa mourners return to Laṅkā in the same manner as the Trojans turned back to Priam's palace after Hector's funeral ceremonies.

These comparative studies would be sufficient in themselves to prove how much indebted Madhusūdan was to the poets of Europe. In him we find the classic dignity of Homer, the magnificence of the similes of Virgil, the grand stateliness of Dantesque imageries and the epic serenity of Milton. It has been well observed by one of the best commentators on this poem : " *Meghanāda Badha* is the most final and best illustration of the union of the East and the West, which was the main aim of Madhusūdan's literary efforts. Its main ideas are from *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīkī and Kṛttibāsa ; the incidents have been arranged after the *Iliad* of Homer ; the language breathes of the stately and grand verse of Milton ; its ' alaṅkāra ' beauties are after the Sanskrit poems. It abounds in places with echoes of Vālmīkī, Vyāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Kṛttibāsa on the one hand and on the

other of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso, Shakespeare, and Milton." [1] Had the poet written verses all through his life in English, he would have been one of those writers that men talk of occasionally and at rare intervals as things of curiosity and objects of academic interest. Few would have cared to read him seriously. It was an auspicious day for Bengali literature when Madhusūdan wrote this poem and added to Bengali poetry a dignity and grandeur, a sonorousness and imaginative height, a boldness of conception, unknown and undreamt of before, and it is certain that he has not been eclipsed so far in his particular sphere and no greater specimen of heroic poetry has as yet been written in Bengali. This was possible only because of the fact that Madhusūdan had as his models the vast storehouse of Western epic poetry. Himself an original poet of high order and a genius endowed with rare scholarship and ability, the foreign influence on his mind acted well.

Hector Badha Kāvya, a poem on the death of Hector, was dedicated to his friend Bhudeb Mukerjee, the eminent educationist and man of letters. The subject-matter was taken from Homer and the language is also Homeric. Hitherto, Bengali poets had composed soft and sweet lyrics or devotional songs. The grand heroic poetry was unknown to them. In the preface to this poem he expressed his profound admiration for Western epics and specially the works of Homer. He intended to write one more poem on the epic-model. This was to deal with the conquest of Ceylon. Madhusūdan made a synopsis of the preliminaries of this work and these are based mostly on the first book of the *Æneid*, though the plot planned by him differs in details from Virgil. To Rājnārayaṇ Basu he wrote in 1861 : "I like a subject with oceanic and mountain scenery, with sea voyages, battles, and love-adventures. It gives a fellow's invention such a wide scope." Murajā, Pavana, Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu, and Yakṣa were to be modelled after Juno, Æolus, Venus, Jupiter, and Mercury. "It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite grace of the Greek mythology on our own," he wrote to the same friend. Had he been able to fulfil his plans there would have been another opportunity of making a study of Western influence on his poetry.

Western influence is seen in another poem. *Tilottamā Sambhaba Kāvya* (1860) is romantic poetry in Bengali after the model of

[1] Rai Bahadur Dinanath Sanyal, Introduction to *Meghanada-Badha Kavya* (translated from the original Bengali).

Keats in *Hyperion*. It is an eulogy of beauty which was the ideal of Keats. The beginning is as stately as *Hyperion* and it is likely that Milton exercised some influence on it.[1] Tilottamā looking at her own beauty is like Eve in *Paradise Lost*. But the poem lacks the human interest of Milton. The characters do not seem to be persons of flesh and blood. In Milton, Hell is the lowest region of the world. In this poem, the home of Viśvakarmā which is situated in the northern-most end of the world is the lowest region. Viśvakarmā creating Tilottamā, and Vulcan making the armour of Achilles are alike in their labours. About this poem, Rajendralāl Mitra wrote to Rājnārayaṇ Basu, "The ideas are no doubt borrowed, and Keats and Shelley and Kalidas and Milton have been largely, very largely, put in requisition ; but as you justly say, 'whatever passes through the crucible of the author's mind receives an original shape.'" Rajendralāl further speaks of "the Miltonic grandeur of Tilottamā".

Personal and individual love-poems were successfully attempted by him after the manner of European poets in the *Vrajāṅganā Kāvya*. The ode form is used in these poems. The poet made a distinct change in Rādhā's character. In the works of the Vaiṣṇava poets she is a half-divine or semi-divine woman. But here she has been given a human touch. She has the emotions and sentiments of a human being. Kṛṣṇa is also different from the customary Vaiṣṇava conception. He is simply a human lover. Madhusūdan lacked the devotional emotion and fervour of Vaiṣṇava poets and therefore his conception of love is not of the type of Vidyāpati and Chaṇḍīdāsa. Some critics try to trace in these poems the influence of Vaiṣṇava poetry. But if they have anything at all in common with the Vaiṣṇava poems the similarity is on the surface only. Madhusūdan appreciated Vaiṣṇava poetry but he could never think of Rādhā in her divine ecstasies. At the most he could think of her just like the Gopīs who are always human and whose love for Kṛiṣṇa is for Rādhā's sake only.

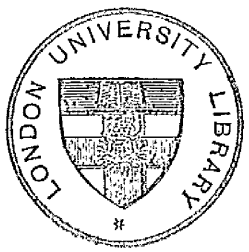
Vīrāṅganā Kāvya, another work in blank verse, was written in imitation of the epistle of Ovid (the *Heroides*) and the epistles of Pope. The subject-matter is woman's love in straits. Both Ovid and Madhusūdan portray legendary characters. But it is a pity that Ovid's eroticism and frank sensibility influenced Madhusūdan to a certain extent as in the epistle from Tārā to Chandra.

[1] Rāmgati Nyayaratna notes the English style of beginning from the middle in this poem, p. 262, *Discourse on Bengali Language and Literature*.

Another important literary achievement of Madhusūdan for which he was mainly indebted to Europe is the introduction of the sonnet into Bengali. It was during his sojourn in Europe that he first tried to write in this new form. In 1865 he wrote to Gaurdas Basak from France : " I have been lately reading Petrarca, the Italian poet, and scribbling some ' sonnets ' after his manner. . . . I dare say the sonnet (Chaturdaspadi) will do wonderfully well in our language. . . . Our Bengali is a very beautiful language, it only wants men of genius to polish it up. . . . It is, or rather it has the elements of a great language in it." A sonnet inscribed to Dante elicited words of appreciation from Victor Emmanuel, king of Italy, who wrote : " It will be a ring which will connect the Orient with the Occident." Among his better-known poems, one addressed to Bengal reminds one invariably of Byron's. " My Native Land, Good Night," in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

Apart from the introduction of blank verse and the enrichment of Bengali literature by the writing of epic poetry, rich with heroic figures and grand descriptions, his greatest contribution to his literature is the creation of a secular poetry, a poetry which like older Bengali poetry does not preach the cult of some deity. " When you sit down to read poetry leave aside all religious bias," was his advice to a friend.[1] Much of his poetry deals with the passion and prejudices of living men and women though it cannot be denied that it is untouched by anything divine or supernatural. He wrote poetry which forms no part of any religio-literary cycle but is poetry for its own sake. It may be suggested that Vidyāsundara too was free from the religious touch. But Bhāratachandra's poem stands on a different level. He found in it an opportunity of delineating a contemporary incident, magnified somewhat by his revengeful spirit and marred with frequent touches of indecency. Madhusūdan would never support such unseemly ideals in a poet who vitiated his art for personal purposes and lowered the standard of literature. He turned the tide of public taste to a far better channel and saved it from degeneration. In a land ridden with conventions and customs, he had the courage to revolt from old-world ideas and it was quite proper that a Bengali imbued with Western ideas should do so. The course of Bengali poetry was directed to something better and received a new shape, freeing itself from conventional ideas, whether intellectual or moral.

[1] Letter dated the 29th August, 1861, to Rājnārayaṇ Basu.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9

BENGALI STAGE AND DRAMA

J. K. DASGUPTA PH.D. 1933

The earliest forms of drama in Bengal were known as the 'Yatras' which were theatrical performances of a popular nature in which the song-element preponderated. The subject-matter was generally taken from religion, mythology and popular history and almost all the ingredients were mixed up together. The platform for such performances was an open-air one, sometimes in the 'Natmandir,' but generally in the courtyards, and no scenic apparatus was used, though dresses suitable to the *dramatis personae* were requisitioned. The stage idea was entirely unknown. It is a matter of speculation why inspite of the influence of Sanskrit literature drama did not grow up in Bengal. Of course the inherent tendency of the Bengali mind has been towards the poetic and the idealistic rather than to the spectacular and the showy and therefore in the popular dramas songs were in abundance leaving little scope for dialogue. The lyrical vein in the Bengali Yatras was moreover fostered by Vaishnava poetry.

There was a vast body of Yatra-literature in Bengal beginning from the pre-Vaishnava period. The *Gita-Govinda* is considered as a Yatra or miracle play in Sanskrit.[1] Unfortunately as printing came into vogue in Bengal only in the last century the earliest Bengali yatras have been lost. Those that have been handed down to modern generations belonged to the last century and they are not the best representative works of the writers of Yatras. It has been opined by a learned critic that the Yatras degenerated.[2] But perhaps it was a case of decay due to lack of proper encouragement and want of patronage rather than a case of natural death. Even now the Yatra exists though in

[1] N. K. Chattopadhyay, The Yatras or Popular Dramas of Bengal, 1882, pp. 44-45.

[2] S. K. De, Bengali Literature in the 19th Century, p. 453.

the lingering state of a tubercular patient and it has lost much of its former simplicity.

Some people are inclined to think that the Yatra was full of crude and undeveloped dramatic elements. The Yatra had certainly its defects but it had its brighter side also. Even a scholar and religious reformer like Sri Chaitanya tried to popularise his religious teachings through these plays and himself joined in dramatic performances.[1] As the early Dionysian plays preceded the drama of Greece, as the Mystery, Miracle, Morality and Interlude plays preceded English Drama, so did the Yatra herald modern Bengali Drama. E. P. Horrwitz is perhaps right when he says, "The revival in Bengal was religious as well as dramatic; the fermentation worked silently, but was powerful enough to infuse new life into the forsaken temples and antiquated theatres of India."[2] One should not of course expect to find in these plays the high literary qualities of the great Indian dramatists. For a long time they continued to afford innocent and cheap recreation to the masses. They educated the general public who were ignorant of higher knowledge by bringing before their minds aspects of religion and history in a popular light. They instilled an education into those who did not understand the deeper truths of philosophy and religion. They popularised these sentiments in everyday life. They might have been often on hackneyed subjects but that did not in any way lessen their popularity. Their influence on the literary side of Bengali drama at present is scanty but in some form or other they still continue to influence the Bengali theatre. Our theatres are not yet free from the imperceptible elements of the Yatras. The theatre-going public demand songs, comic scenes, dances, funny situations and incident-elements in which Yatras abounded. It has been suggested that the death-knell of the old drama was rung with the coming of dramas on European

[1] Lochandas, Chaitanya Mangal, Madhya Khanda.

[2] The Indian Theatre, p. 176.

models.[1] On closer study one finds, however, that the old Yatra has assimilated much of the new drama and put on a new garb. Its spirit may be old but its form in certain respects is new. It has imbibed some of the elements of the modern drama. The Swadeshi Yatras of Mukunda Das are very popular and instructive and show a clever combination of old and new elements. In the villages of Bengal the Yatras find ready and eager audiences. The time has come when there should be a revival of the older dramatic forms like the Yatras, Kathakatas, Pañchalis, etc. That would perhaps be possible in Bengal when she has her own national stage. There was once a movement in Bengal for a Bengali National Stage. But that proposal evaporated like many other paper transactions in Bengal.

No specimen of any regular dramatic work in Bengali is available before the translation of a Sanskrit play named *Chaitanya Chandrodaya* of Paramananda Sen, who belonged to the 16th century, by a Vaishnava poet Premdas in 1712.[2] Two other works are also mentioned by some authorities—*Jagannath Ballav* by Lochandas and *Radha Krishna Lila Kadamba* by Jadunandandas.[3] All these are in the ' payar ' metre and contain comments of the translators.

Prior to the rise of the modern Bengali drama it would be necessary to examine the gradual development of the Bengali stage as there has always been a growing demand for new types of plays along with the growth of theatres. The earliest European settlers of Calcutta did not give up their own amusements, entertainments and festivities. The foreigners have their own concerts, balls, theatricals and public recreations.[4] The author of Calcutta : Old and New, says, " In the matter of theatres, old

1 Dr. S. K. De, Bengali Literature in the 19th Century, p. 453.

2 S. K. De, Sanskrit Poetics, Vol. I, p. 257; D. C. Sen, Bangabhasa O Sahitya, p. 304.

3 Viswakosh, Part IX.

4 Good Old Days of the John Company, Vol. I, Ch. IX; Kathleen Blechynden, Calcutta ; Old and New, Ch. IV.

Calcutta was well-supplied, but their quality does not seem to have kept pace with their quantity."[1] So early as 1775 there was a playhouse near Lalbazar which was called simply the Theatre and had among its patrons Warren Hastings, Sir Elizah Impey and other distinguished officers in the East India Company's service. The earliest Calcutta theatres were owned by the foreigners but these were taken as models by Bengalis when the need was felt for a Bengali stage. The successive presence in Calcutta of a large number of playhouses gave an impetus to Bengali theatrical enterprise and attracted the interest of the Bengali public to this new type of amusement.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries among some of the more well-known English theatres in Calcutta were Mrs. Bristowe's Theatre (1787) and the Bengali Theatre (1795). The latter playhouse had an interesting history. In 1787 a Russian adventurer named Herasim Lebedeff came to Calcutta. With the assistance of a Bengali teacher he learnt some of the Indian vernaculars such as Bengali, Hindi, etc., and with the permission of Sir John Shore (afterwards Lord Teignmouth), the then Governor-General, founded a theatre near old Chinabazar (then known as Domtullah) and staged two plays in Bengali : *the Disguise* (1795) and *Love is the Best Doctor* (1796) translating them from English. Sir George Grierson says, "They would seem to have been the earliest adaptations of European dramatic form to the Bengali stage."[2] Lebedeff's own account of himself would certainly be of interest. He writes, "I translated two English dramatic pieces, namely, the Disguise and Love is the Best Doctor, into the Bengali language; and having observed that the Indians preferred mimicry and drollery to plain grave solid sense, however purely expressed, I therefore fixed on these plays, and which were most pleasingly filled with a group of watchmen, chokeydars, savoyards,

[1] H. E. A. Cotton, Calcutta : Old and New, p. 152.

[2] Calcutta Review, October, 1927; *ibid*, November, 1923.

canera thieves, ghoonia; lawyers, gumosta ; and among the rest a corps of petty plunderers." [1]

In 1798 two theatres, the Calcutta and Wheeler Place, managed by Europeans are heard of. Before 1808 there was a theatre at Chandannagore and in 1812 there was one known as the Athenaeum in the Circular Road. In 1815 there was one at Kidderpur and before 1817 Dum Dum had a theatre of which the star-actress was Mrs. Esther Leach who afterwards joined the famous Chowringhee and Sans Souci theatres. The Boithokkhana theatre had a well-known actress, Mrs. Cohen.[2] But the most important public theatre in Calcutta was the Chowringhee theatre originally founded in 1813 as the Private Subscription Theatre and firmly consolidated in 1815. It was located in the street now known as the Theatre Road. A fire destroyed it in 1839.[3] But throughout its years of existence it exerted an influence not only on the European community of Calcutta but also upon the Bengali public. Horace H. Wilson and Captain D. L. Richardson were two of its most prominent patrons. Plays like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, Otway's *Venice Preserved* were performed. The Sans Souci (1841), another well-known theatre of Calcutta was famous in its own day.[4] It was located in the same building which is now occupied by the St. Xavier's College.[5] All these playhouses influenced the rise of the Bengali theatres and served as models to enterprising Bengalis.[6]

One of the first theatrical performance of a Bengali play was the staging of *Vidya Sundar* at the house of a gentleman at

[1] Preface to "A Grammar of the Pure and Mixed Indian Dialects, Methodically arranged at Calcutta" by Herasim Lebedeff (1801).

[2] Cotton's date of this theatre is 1824 while the author of the Good Old Days of the John Company gives it as 1827, *ibid*, p. 135, Vol. I.

[3] Asiatic Journal, Vol. XXX, Part II, p. 177; Sir Evan Cotton, A Hundred Years Ago : Calcutta in 1830, Statesman, 4th May, 1930.

[4] Bengal Past and Present, 1907, pp. 22-26; *ibid*, 1908, p. 497, "The Sans Souci and its Star," Asiatic Journal, 1841, Vol. II.

[5] Sir Evan Cotton, Supreme Court Memories (XII).

[6] Calcutta Review, January, 1924, Bengali Theatre, p. 109.

Shyambazar. Women of the town were enlisted to play the rôle of women. The date of this performance is not certain. It was either in 1831 or 1833.[1] *Vidya Sundar* however was more a play of an undeveloped type than a regular drama. In those days there was dearth of good Bengali dramas and naturally the educated community satisfied their taste by performing English plays and looked up to English drama for models for their own plays. In 1832 the Hindu Theatre was pioneered by Prosonno Kumar Tagore with Wilson's translation of the *Uttar Rama Charita*. There was a special fascination also in the staging of dramas in English. The glamour of Derozio and Richardson's name was at its height and on the encouragement of Richardson the students of the Hindu College began their debuts with dramatic performance of English plays. Richardson infused into the minds of young Bengali scholars the idea of imbibing and assimilating the real spirit of English drama through a first-hand study of the plays of Shakespeare. Thus could some of the best intellects of Bengal introduce some of the best things of foreign literatures into the literature of their land.[2] For some years more English plays were performed by Bengali youngmen of Calcutta under the guidance of Wilson, Richardson and Herman Jeffroy, Principal of the Oriental Seminary. But the days of English plays were soon over. The Bengali drama was taking its own course towards a definite shape under the influence of Western culture. There was at the outset some feeling of opposition shown by Sanskrit Pundits of the old school but gradually that spirit disappeared and men well-versed in the literature of the West turned their energies to the creation of Bengali dramatic literature. "I shall look to the great dramatists of Europe for models," wrote Michael M. S. Dutt to his friend Rajnarayan Bose. But it was a Pundit of the Sanskritic school who wrote the first modern drama in Bengali.

[1] *Ibid*, December, 1923, p. 382; January, 1924, p. 110.
[2] *Ibid*, January, 1926, p. 128.

Ramnarayan Tarkaratna's *Kulin Kula Sarbaswa* (1854) which was a criticism of the custom of polygamy is generally regarded as the first Bengali drama in its modern sense.[1] It was divided into regular acts but not in the Sanskrit sense.[2] Some other plays by Tarkaratna contain 'scenes' in the English sense of the term. Two other Bengali plays which deserve some attention were "*Bhadrarjun*" of Tara Chand Sikdar and "*Bhanumati Chittavilas*" of Hara Chandra Ghose. The second one was an imitation of *The Merchant of Venice*. These were not staged at all. Written between 1850 and 1854 they mark the initial stage of Bengali drama.

In March, 1857, *Kulin Kula Sarbaswa* was staged at the house of Joyram Bysak and it was repeated later on at the residence of Gopaldas Sett on the encouragement of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.[3] With this play begins the days of the modern Bengali drama. The new band of writers totally dispensed with the prelude of Sanskrit plays and introduced scenes in each act. This is a characteristic of the Romantic drama of Europe and was in direct contravention of the ancient classical rules of the Sanskritists. Though written by a Sanskrit scholar it could not escape the spirit of the times and the very subject-matter was a strong condemnation of the obnoxious custom of marrying many wives. It was a timely protest against a social vice that had long held society like an octopus and this voicing of public sentiment was one of the effects of a new outlook upon literature. The drama was not only a source of enjoyment. It aimed at public morality also.[4]

The next important event in the history of the Bengali stage was the inauguration of the Vidyotsahini Theatre by Kali Prasanna Singha in 1857. A rich Calcutta landholder, he was

[1] R. W. Frazer, Literary History of India, p. 414.

[2] Bengal Literary Conference Report, Vol. XIV, p. 35.

[3] R. W. Frazer's date of this performance is 1858. A different date is given in *Calcutta Review*, December, 1923. "Early History of the Bengali Stage."

[4] *Cf.* Sir Henry A. Jones, Foundations of a National Drama, Lecturer I, III.

a patron of learning and his grandfather Joy Krishna Singh was one of the founders of the Hindu College and one of its first Indian directors. Ramnarayan Tarakaratna's translation of *Beni Saṃhar* opened the first night, 9th April, 1857. In the month of November of the same year a free translation of *Vikramorbasi* was staged. One of the leading Calcutta periodicals commented on this performance in glowing words.[1] Journalists in those days included men of culture like Girish Chandra Ghose, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dr. Sambhu Chandra Mukherji and Kristo Das Pal. The official circle in Calcutta including Sir Cecil Beadon often encouraged the players with their presence. Though Sanskrit plays in translation were performed at this theatre they were considerable improvements upon the originals and plenty of additions and alterations were made to correspond with the growing needs of the time. Gorgeous scenic apparatus, costly robes, valuable jewels and ornaments and a lot of other paraphernalia were used. The crowd had not yet invaded the theatres. The organisers never catered to the taste of the mob or the rabble, people with little intellectual or artistic sense, people who come to the theatres and go away with no ideas and whose presence is for mere amusement and frivolity. But such unhappy days were to come with the rise of the public theatres and professional dramatic companies. There was an occasion when theatrical performances were banned among the students by the University authorities. The audience at theatrical shows in Kali Prasanna's days resembled the glorious days of Elizabethan drama when a Sidney and a Raleigh reclined on their velvet cloaks and listened to plays performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Company.

1 "A peculiar characteristic of our theatricals is the absence of dramatic opening, which belongs to the romantic school of modern drama." The writer brought forth in course of his comment comparisons of some passages in the play with the scriptural vision of Elizah's ascension to Heaven, the agony of Milton's Adam at the loss of Eve, the tender emotion of Hamlet's soliloquy and the moralization of Lear's Fool while mocking at his sorrow."—Hindu Patriot, December, 3, 1857.

But people were not altogether satisfied with translations and adaptations. They felt the necessity of works of original merit. Such dramatic works required playwrights with good intellectual equipment. They also needed a place where such plays could be performed. The Belgachia theatre which was founded in 1858 as a permanent stage soon became the centre of fresh dramatic enterprises. The prime movers were Rajas Iswar and Pratap Chandra Singha of Paikpara and Maharajah Jatindra Mohan Tagore. It was here in 1859 that Madhusudan Dutt's *Sarmistha* (1858) was staged for the first time. This play was a direct revolt from Sanskrit rules and conventionalities of dramaturgy. "If I should live to write other dramas, you may rest assured, I shall not allow myself to be bound by the dicta of Mr. Viswanath of Sahitya Darpan," wrote Madhu to a friend.[1] Though the plot was taken from Indian mythology, the presentation was entirely new and the author wrote to one of his intimate friends :

" I am aware, my dear fellow, that, there will, in all likelihood, be something of a foreign air about my drama, but if the language be not ungrammatical, if the thoughts be just and glowing and the plot interesting, the characters well maintained, what care you if there be a foreign air about the thing? Do you dislike Moore's poetry because it is full of Orientalism, Byron's poetry for its Asiatic air, Carlyle's prose for its Germanism? Besides remember that I am writing for that portion of my countrymen who think as I think, whose minds have been more or less imbued with Western ideas and modes of thinking, and that it is my intention to throw off the fetters forged for us by a servile admiration for everything Sanskrit."[2]

In 1858, Madhusudan wrote *Padmavati*, the plot of which was based on the Greek tale of the Apple of Discord. He gave

[1] Letter, dated 15th May, 1860, to Rajnarayan Bose. To Gourdas Bysack he wrote, ' I promise you a play that will astonish the old rascals in the shape of the Pandits."

[2] Letter to Gourdas Bysack.

the Western story a Hindu garb but the Western atmosphere could not be entirely hidden in the Eastern surrounding and background. The changes are apparent. Juno, Venus, Paris, Helen and Discordia were transformed respectively into Sachi, Rati, Indrani, Padmavati and Narad. Pallas Athene appeared as the Yaksha Queen Muraja. Of this play Dutt said, "This drama of mine must contain some foreign atmosphere about it. To Rajnarayan Bose he wrote, "As a jolly Christian youth, I don't care a pin's head for Hinduism. I love the grand mythology of our ancestors. It is full of poetry. A fellow with an inventive head can manufacture the most beautiful things out of it." But the first tragic play in Bengali did not come till 1861 when Michael wrote his *Krishnakumari*. While engaged in writing this play he wrote to Keshab Chunder Ganguly, "As for the language the drama to be written in, I shall follow Dr. Johnson's advice:—'If there be,' says he, 'what I believe there is in every nation a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language, as to remain settled and unaltered, this style is to be probably sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without the ambition of elegance.' And he commends Shakespeare for having adopted this language ; and this advice I mean to adopt except where the thoughts rise high of their own accord and clothe themselves with loftier diction, and that will be in the more Tragic parts of the play."

But amateur dramatic writing could not go on for ever if the permanence and stability of the stage were desired. If drama were to make any real headway and advance, the professional playwright was needed who could write first-rate works which could be staged with success. It was in Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844-1912) that the artistic and histrionic faculties, the talents of the author and the actor, the capability of the manager and the dramatist were combined and he marks another

period in Bengali drama and stage enterprise. Dinabandhu Mitra (1829-73) was an earlier writer of drama. One of the first English-educated writers in Bengali, he began his literary career with a work of far-reaching consequence. The *Nil Darpan* (1860) on which his fame generally rests is a dramatic representation of the tragic episodes of the eventful period of indigo disturbances in Bengal. The interest of the play lies not only in its literary value but also in its demonstration of the fact that drama had a great social and political value, a value hitherto very little known and seldom the motive of Indian plays. This was a great gain, this educative value of drama, drama as the means of inculcating lessons to society, or as a vehicle of ventilating social and political grievances and as a platform from which to ridicule abuses in social and moral life. The influence of *Nil Darpan* on the Bengali public was exactly like that of Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in America. It filled the land with outcries against Indigo planters as the wrongs done by them to the cultivators were openly exposed. It was remarked by an English critic that the play shows " an imperfect reading of the spirit of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and the *Merchant of Venice*." But this criticism is unfounded. His next work *Nabin Tapaswini* is at times reminiscent of the *Winter's Tale* so far as the main plot is concerned. In character-making Dinabandhu is indebted to Shakespeare. Falstaff, Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* have been transformed into Jaladhar, Mallika, and Malati. In 1865, another play, *Biye Pagla Buro*, was written which is an imitation of Ben Jonson's comedy, *Epicoene*. But there is a slight deviation from the original in the depiction of the old man mad after marriage. He does not, like Morose, dread every kind of noise and hubbub. The marriage hoax is common to both and the disguise of a boy as bride is changed in Dinabandhu's play to something more suiting Bengali taste. But there are instances of occasional vulgarity and indecency in his plays, probably the effects of the influence of some Elizabethan and Restoration dramatists.

Moreover he was a follower of Iswar Gupta in his literary methods. *Sadhabar Ekadashi* (1866) was a tirade against intemperance and incontinence. Dinabandhu echoed the strong feeling against intemperance shared by many people in his days. Pyari Chand Mitra had written some years back his sketch of drunkards, *Mada Khaoya Bara Daya* (1860). The most interesting character in this play is Nim Chand Dutt, a moral rake who has become a favourite stage-character since his first appearance. He seems to have been an echo of the moral rakes who figure so prominently in 18th century English drama. One of the curious products of a smattering of Western education, this type of character was common in those days in Calcutta society and in farces and social sketches of the period one comes across many such specimens of contemporary Bengali life visualised. The comedy of manners had a good imitator in Dinabandhu. His plays contain all the traits of that school—both good and bad. Slang, gossip, conversation verging upon indecency, social evils, contemporary manners, conversational style, personification of typical characters characterise them.

Bankim Chandra was of opinion that Dinabandhu was not successful in the treatment of his characters as he was too much influenced by English literature. He did not have many living ideals before him and hence sometimes his characters have been lifeless and unnatural. But Dinabandhu combined to a great extent and with a fair amount of success both realism and idealism. His "Ghatiram Deputy" and "Kenaram," his Nimchand and Bholachand are real and vivid. Many of his works show a great deal of freedom of thought which has only been possible in the present age—the period of Western influence. Men are allowed to think and write in their own way. Every shade of opinion is free to be expressed and men have liberty of thinking. There is a spirit of enquiry, independence of thought and spirit of criticism. In a country repressed with conventions and rigmarole customs

handed down from generation to generation this was a new departure.

The Jorasanko Theatre, a private and amateur stage, managed by the members of the family of Debendra Nath Tagore, performed several plays adapted from Moliere by Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, who was also a writer of some historical and patriotic plays. These are, *Puru Vikram, Sarojini Natak, Asrumati, Sapnamyi.* Here Rabindranath's earliest dramatic writings were acted. Farces and operas were well-known features of this theatre. The public theatres took up operas at a much later date. Of course the Jorasanko Theatre was not the pioneer in staging farces. The Pathuriaghata Theatre of Jatindra Mohan Tagore staged several farces in 1865 which were written by Jatindra Mohan. Between 1872 and 1873 Ardhendu Sekhar Mustafi staged some farces as repartees to a number of satires performed by Mr. Dave Carson in the Opera House at Chowranghee, which were known as *Dave Carson Sahib Ka Pucka Tamasha.* It is therefore clear that the Bengali theatrical companies had a vigilant eye upon what was done by Europeans of the same profession in Calcutta.

Private theatrical enterprise inaugurated under the influence of English theatres, however, could not satisfy the growing demand of the public for a permanent stage, the beginnings of which can be traced to the Baghbazar Theatrical Company's performances, arranged in 1867 by Girish Chandra Ghosh. This amateur company was the nucleus of the first Bengali public company of actors. In 1871 it assumed the name of the National Theatre. As a matter of certainty of accommodation free tickets were issued by the management. The first regular sale of tickets was made on the 7th December, 1872, when the first public performance of *Nil Darpan* was held in Calcutta. This event " was a red letter day in the history of the Bengali stage, for it marked the commencement of a new era which completely did away with the amateur character of the Bengali Theatre." No women were however engaged for acting the characters of women. But the National Theatre was closed in March, 1873.

The Grand National Theatre which came into existence in 31st December, 1873, engaged women for feminine rôles. Public antipathy towards the employment of women in public theatres was not at all strong at this time. A large number of theatres came in the successive years—the Oriental and Lyceum Theatres, the Beadon Street Star Theatre (1833), the Hatibagan Star Theatre (1888), the Emerald (1888), the Minerva (1893), the Classic (1897), the Kohinoor (1907), many of them under the direction of Girish Chandra Ghosh. But some of these had a short existence.

From the comedy of manners of Dinabandhu to the mythological and religious plays of Girish is another step in the history of Bengali drama. The comedies of Dinabandhu had served their purpose and there was once more a revival of plays in which the mythological and religious elements were the main factors. Men were tired of plays on other themes. They had too much of them already. Girish was a disciple of Ramkrishna Paramhansha Deva. Dakhineswar played and important part in directing the cultural life of Bengal in the last quarter of the 19th century. It was the spiritual home of a band of workers headed by Swami Vivekananda whose services to their country was of a very high order—culturally and spiritually. On the opposite bank of the Ganges Swami Vivekananda founded his monastery at Belur and from this place he sent forth to the world at large his bold message of neo-Hinduism, Hindu thought and culture. Girish did not escape this thought-current and his writings were streaked with ideas imbibed at the feet of his Guru. There was at that period the stir of a new life in Hindu society, a new zeal for Hindu religion. Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and Paribrajak Krishna Prasanna Sen were lecturing on Hinduism and the country was flooded with new enthusiasm. Men were attracted to the faith of their forefathers. The drama as a reflexion of national life and character expressed this ferment. In the works of Girish Hindu ideals were highly extolled.

Girishchandra wrote nearly ninety dramatic works—tragedies, comedies, farces, operas, masques, allegories. When a book-keeper at the firm of Messrs. Atkinson Tilton he translated *Macbeth* but the manuscript was somehow lost. But in 1893 he made a Bengali version of this play and staged it at the Minerva Theatre. On this occasion he employed English artists for scenic arrangements and stage-decorations. His knowledge of Shakespearean drama and criticism was very deep and some of his writings on Acting and Actors are of a high standard. His early works were more like Yatras and he popularised the opera to an extent hitherto unknown. He wrote himself many operas thus naturalising an entirely new branch of dramatic art. During the period of his Hatibagan Star Theatre acitivities two dramas, *Buddhadeva Charita* and *Chaitanya Lila,* were written under foreign inspiration. The first was based on Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* and the second was inspired according to his own admission by *Paradise Regained.*[1] He discussed social problems in his dramas. But it was not after the model of the drama of Ibsen or other European dramatists that he tried to examine social problems. The greatest service of Girish was that he made the Bengali theatre a popular institution, a democratic body, not dependent upon the patronage of rich Rajahs and Zaminders but selfreliant. Since his time the profession of the actor has been held in more respect though some odium still clings to it. Girish often lamented that people looked down upon his profession. But he has become since then a national object of pride and honour. He made possible the rise of a distinct class of playwrights and players. Hitherto the layman amidst his other vocations was in the habit of writing dramas, but now the dramatist is a person whose sole business was playwriting.

We now pass on to the new type of plays known in West as Symbolical plays, the most well-known representatives of

[1] Life of Girishchandra by Upendranath Vidyabhusan, p. 41, Footnote.

which are the works of W. B. Yeats, A. E. Synge, and Maeterlinck. The Indian mind is peculiarly spiritual. There is a mystic element in the poetic genius of Indians. Rabindranath Tagore is endowed with a rich share of this ancient heritage of his land, but it is quite likely that he expresses his ideas after the manner of the Symbolists of Europe. He has a close affinity with W. B. Yeats who introduced the poet to the Western world and who wrote an introduction to the English *Gitanjali*. The Symbolical drama in Bengali of which he is the best writer is however limited only to to the private stage. The general public are not yet ready for it nor in a position to understand the meaning hidden under the surface. Most of the plays of Tagore have been performed by members of his family or by the pupils of his Shanti Niketan School under his personal instructions. There is no division of the plays into regular acts and scenes. There are no stage directions, nor any suggestion as to the use of scenic apparatus. Everything is plain and simple to look at. In the Symbolical plays of Tagore there is the same dreamy atmosphere, etherealized landscape, spiritual background, vague suggestions, weird beauty, aloofness from the material world as in the plays of Yeats (*cf. Shadowy Waters*) and Synge (*cf. Deirdre of the Sorrows*). In them more is meant than meets the ears.

The Symbolical play has brought with it the Problem play the best examples of which in the West are some of the works of Ibsen (*cf. Doll's House*), Hauptmann (*cf. the Weavers*), Galsworthy (*cf. Strife*), Strindberg (*cf. There are Crimes and Crimes*), Bernard Shaw (*cf. Candida*). Some of the plays of Tagore like the *Post Office* and *The King of the Dark Chamber* are strictly symbolical but in several plays he has mixed up symbolism with problem as in *Mukta Dhara* and *Rakta Karabi*. The form in these plays is symbolical but the matter is problematic. Society as it is constituted now is a vast complex body consisting of diverse conflicting elements and the modern dramatist has to approach the various problems and difficulties

that confront society with a view to arrive at some clear conclusion, not like the practical economist or the statistician with his list of facts and figures, nor like the crafty politician with his theories and formulas, but with the penetrating insight of a poet, the sympathetic attitude of a man intensely feeling for his fellow beings. His conclusions may be sometimes wrong as the literary mind is prone to be idealistic and inclined to dreaming. Yet he may on the other hand hit upon the right course with the intuition that is given to prophets and seers only.

Rabindranath's *Rakta Karabi* (Red Oleanders) is such a play. On the stage, one is afraid, it would not be much of a success, because the background can never be reproduced with the ordinary scenic arrangements, as a strange land looms large behind the action of play where wealth is the only consideration to the dwellers. Under the symbol of a mysterious Yaksha town where the inhabitants are but the parts of a relentless machine-administration bent upon making money, and where the people have no names but numbers to identify them, the dramatist has presented a striking picture of the existing warfare between Capital and Labour in the industrial world or as some critics think the grim fight between an irresponsible bureaucracy and a throttled democracy in the political field.[1] The air is so stifling and poisonous in the whole city that man cannot breathe free air; he is killed by the forces of modern civilisation and has to live there repressing all the finer emotions and instincts of human life. Equally true may be the suggestion that it represents a repressive government treading under its merciless heels with all its weapons of force a discontented people in the name of law and order. The play was written at a time when the political situation in Bengal was rather grave and serious and the Government was faced with a serious situation. It may not be wrong to suppose that the poet might have been led to apply the conditions in his country to the

[1] " Red Oleanders " by Professor Jaygopal Banerjee, Calcutta Review, October, November, 1925 and February, 1926.

shadowy realm of the awful ruler who never showed his face but always lived hidden under a curious network of hazy power. Politics is also the background of *Mukta Dhara* where the ideal of passive resistance finds a prominent exposition. In *Achalayatan* social affairs are given more importance. Hindu society with all its time-honoured laws and customs, its codified rules and rigorous penances for any deviation from these regulations, is the main object of Tagore's criticism.

The Soul Drama which is another outstanding feature of modern European drama has some examples in Bengali. Rabindranath's *King of the Dark Chamber* and *Post Office* may be taken as Soul Dramas. In *Post Office* there is the same kind of romantic yearning for something beyond human experience as in the *Land of Heart's Desire* of Yeats or the *Blue Bird* of Maeterlinck. There is some inexpressible mystery hovering about it which it is beyond the power of ordinary human sense to unravel. The human soul desires to mingle itself with the infinite and attain fulness. On the whole the influence of the contemporary drama of Europe on Bengali drama has not been very substantial. As yet the older drama occupies the imagination of the people. The time perhaps is not yet ripe for the matter-of-fact and realistic drama of Europe to be engrafted upon the soil of Bengal. Modern European drama is too outspoken, too bare, too bald, too cruel, too much shorn of the softer side of human nature to find a ready audience in Bengal. It is not that Bengali drama is devoid of any kind of realism. It certainly has a realism in it, but that realism is not the crude and sometimes hideous realism of European drama. Life in the West is more complex. European society has its own peculiar problems and therefore the dramatists of the West have various problems facing them at every step. The range of experience of Bengali dramatists is limited and restricted and as yet society and life in Bengal have not come to such an *impasse* that all our problems, needs and wants can be solved on the theatrical platforms.

The West has its banks, factories, divorce courts, night clubs, gambling dens, slums and juvenile courts. Barrack life in the big cities of Europe, hotel existence, life in apartments and boarding houses, enforced bachelor and maidenhood, bachelor-girls, and hosts of other things are the products of modern European civilisation, which depends much upon the machine for its comfort and happiness. In an industrialised atmosphere life is mechanised and the outlook for the future is sometimes dark to Western thinkers even. Therefore the problems that Western drama has to deal with to-day are numerous. From the romantic plays of the old type and the folk and peasant plays of Ireland, one finds the drama of ideas, the drama of naturalism, the drama of symbolism, the drama of the 'Eternal Triangle,' dramas dealing with woman-problems, sex, scenes from married life, divorce, love, social criticism plays of propaganda such as the press, relations between the rich and the poor, race antagonism, capital and labour, drama of satire, etc. (See Aspects of Modern Drama by F. W. Chandler, 1920 and Modern English Drama by A. E. Morgan.) Its subjects are peculiarly Western in nature and outlook and it would be too much to expect just now the reverberations of the same feelings and sentiments on the Bengali stage. But perhaps the time will come when such an occasion will arise. We cannot deny the fact that our social life has to some extent become disorganised owing to the impact from the West as well as from natural causes which has long been corroding its vitals. Timeworn and old-world ideas have no influence. The structure of society has become loose. The old joint family system has gone out of order. Our women are no longer content to remain as part of our moveable and immoveable property. There is a cry for "equal rights" in every sphere of activity. But these are till now on the surface or limited to a narrow circle of people. The innermost depths of society are still undisturbed and untroubled by new ideas. They live with the ideas of bygone ages. That is

perhaps one of the reasons why the realistic or the symbolical drama of Europe has not been popular in Bengal to any appreciable extent.

In certain respects Bengali drama, or more truly speaking Bengali stage, has not taken the fullest advantages of the study of European drama. The musical and melodramatic element is still very predominant in it as some vestige of the older drama which was mostly made up of music and songs still remains with it. Drama is less an histrionic art and more of highflown stylish travesty. The literary excellence is spoiled by indiscriminate singing, concert and orchestra-music and last but not the least of all, hotch-potch dancing of the most ill-bred type which is jarring upon the aesthetic sense. Lately there has been a tendency towards more simplicity and naturalness but it has not yet reached such a stage as to meet with universal approval and the organisers of this movement have supporters among the intellectual classes only. Bengali stage would have been cleared of much rubbish and drama would improve in Bengal if reforms on the lines suggested in England by Edward Gordon Craig and St. John Ervine were to be carried out.[1]

A marked tendency during recent years among dramatists has been to pay a little attention to historical accuracy. This began with D. L. Roy. But in some plays like Surendranath Banerjee's *Alexandar,* Apareshchandra Mukherjee's *Iraner Rani* and Nishikanta Basuray's *Lalitaditya* the anchronisms are too glaring. It can, of course, be said in defence of these writers that even Shakespeare was not very strict about historical accuracy and dramatic effects looked more to art than to history. The plays of Ben Jonson are not successful inspite of their historical precision. Critics clamouring for honesty in historical matters overlook the fact that art suffers where historical fidelity has to be observed.

[1] Edward Craig, Towards a New Theatre; Art of the Theatre; Ervine, The Organised Theatre.

National aspirations and sentiments have been instructively taught through the drama. Girischandra's historical drama *Mir Kasem, Chattrapati, Sirajudaullha* are full of patriotic fervour. Dwijendralal Roy's *Durgadas, Rana Pratap, Mewar Patna, Singhal Vijay* and Kshirodprasad Vidyavinod's *Pratapaditya* created sensations in the public mind. The influence of these plays is seen working on contemporary drama. But open-air theatres and popular dramas are in the throes of decay. The glitter of the gorgeous and pompous playhouse attract the imagination of the people and the ordinary people are thus losing the means of their enjoyment. They do not care for the claptrap of modern stage. They find no charm in it. Rabindranath truly says, "Operas based on legendary poems, recitations and storytelling by trained men, the lyrical wealth of popular literature distributed far and wide by the agency of mendicant singers—these are the clouds that help to irrigate the minds of the people with ideas which in their original form belonged to the difficult doctrine of metaphysics." [1]

The westernized modern drama of Bengal is for the town-bred people only.[2] The ordinary people preferred and still prefer their popular theatrical shows which make more appeal to them than the works of the learned who are out of touch with their feelings and sentiments. The modern drama appeals to the cultured and educated while the popular shows satisfy the cravings of the unlettered who form the bulk of the population. The modern playwrights do not belong to the commonalty. Most of them come from the upper or middle classes of society and as such they cannot deeply enter into the life of the common people. To write a play dealing with the impulses of the humble people living in villages is not an easy

[1] Viswa Bharati Quarterly, January 1, 1926—The Philosophy of Our People.

[2] Rabindranath Tagore—Modern Review, December, 1913, criticised the imitations in the theatres from the West. (The stage.) Norah Richards, European Influence on the Indian Stage, Modern Review, January, 1914, pleaded for purely Indian plays and not Europeanised versions of Indian Plays or Indianised versions of English ones.

task. The modern theatre has killed that instinct. Even if any attempt were made how far that would be successful is a matter of conjecture. Tagore has written dramas dealing with the characters of village headmen, milkmen, humble village singers, labourers and other ordinary folk but the performance of these plays are witnessed by the educated people while the people who form the characters in them will perhaps never have the opportunity of seeing or knowing anything about them and even if some day they are fortunate enough to do so the very symbolic presentation will stand in their way of understanding even the slightest part. Modern Bengali drama does not portray the life and manners, hopes and aspirations, desires and ideas of a vast majority of the people of Bengal and the modern stage is more responsible for such a state of affairs than anything else. As has been remarked by W. B. Yeats,—

"Our modern theatre, with the seats always growing more expensive and its dramatic art drifting always from the living impulse of life, and becoming more what Rossetti would have called 'soulless self-reflections of man's skill' no longer gives pleasure to any imaginative mind."[1] and the same criticism might be appropriately applied to conditions in Bengal.[2]

JAYANTA KUMAR DASGUPTA

1 Plays and Controversies by W. B. Yeats, pp. 72-3.

2 The writer acknowledges with gratitude the suggestions and criticisms kindly offered by his teacher, Professor Jaygopal Banerjee, in the course of writing this article.

WESTERN INFLUENCE ON BENGALI LITERATURE [1]

(An Introductory Survey)

There has been from the most ancient times an interconnection among the different literatures of the world. The Greeks borrowed much from the Eastern races and in their turn influenced the Romans. The Anglo-Saxons were influenced by the Norman-French culture introduced in England by William the Conqueror. The Elizabethan poets and playwrights were indebted to the culture of the Renaissance brought from Italy by English scholars and travellers. Again, in the age of Charles II, French fashions were imitated in England. The philosophers of Germany stimulated the minds of the poets of the age of Wordsworth. Thus it is seen that in the cultural world no nation can be independent by itself. Schlegel has rightly observed, "That nations who appear later in the world's history and in the general development of humanity should receive a large portion of their intellectual culture as a bequest from those that have preceded them is inevitable and therefore, in itself no reproach." [2] Professor Tucker says, "Nations can no more be independent in the art of literature than in other arts.....True art is of all the world and a nation does best in arts when it corrects its own particular ideas, without meanwhile surrendering itself to a servile imitation of that for which its genius is naturally unfit." [3]

[1] For valuable suggestions the writer is indebted to Professor Jaygopal Banerjee of the University of Calcutta.

[2] History of Literature, p. 58.

[3] Foreign Debt of English Literature.

Good literature is of all the world and the league of intellectual commonwealths must include in itself the best that is thought and written in every country. No nation can say that the pure creative impulse belongs to a particular nation or country. It is no crime to think in the same way as another. Sidney Lee says, "Literature is a living organism gathering sustenance from all quarters. No great national literature has ever subsisted without some foreign nutrition... Absolute originality of idea or form is rarer in great literature than is commonly imagined···A piece of great literature is usually a mighty chain of which links are forged in many workshops." [4]

Intellectual stagnancy is the inevitable consequence of the closing of the channels of outside influence and a nation that slams its doors against all outside factors of knowledge and culture loses much. Culture is not the monopoly of one nation or another. It belongs equally to all the races of the earth, different though its ideals may be according to environments and circumstances. Different influences have worked on Bengali literature in its growth and development. Taking its origin from Sanskrit, the original source of many of the vernaculars of India, it is but natural that Bengali should have been influenced to a considerable extent by this ancient literature. Sanskrit has furnished to Bengali literary men various kinds of literary forms and models and has saturated the Bengali mind with the spirit of Sanskrit classics—the sweetness of the poetry of Valmiki, the rich dramatic literature of Kalidas and Bhababhuti. Their minds were fed upon Sanskrit critical commentaries, expositions and manuals of rhetoric and prosody. As the mother-literature of most of the Indian vernaculars Sanskrit has served as the most potent factor in the development of her offshoots. In her heyday of glory, the influence of Sanskrit was paramount over the vernacular

[4] Place of English Literature in the Modern University.

literatures of India and these naturally could not make much headway owing to too much of Sanskrit supremacy. Many of the rigidities of Sanskrit scholarship stood in the way of a wholesome development of the vernaculars. Too much attention was paid to Sanskritic studies and therefore the need for the advancement of vernacular literatures was not felt to any great extent. Gradually, however, there was an ebb in the enthusiasm of those brought up in the Sanskrit school of literary culture. As that literature showed signs of deterioration a tendency sprang up to build the vernaculars. The old stock became a sort of dead mass, lifeless and inane and it had to make room for new and strong offsprings.

Besides Sanskrit there were other Indian influences on Bengali but these have been from a common culture and civilisation. The first of these was Buddhism. Next came the Jain influence. The results of these influences are seen chiefly in the poetry of the period between 800 and 1200 A. D.[5] The influence of Hindi and Maithil is found in the Vaishnava literature of mediaeval Bengal and Vidyapati, the great poet of Bihar, is claimed both by the people of his province and those of Bengal. A mixed kind of language which was extensively used in poetry grew up as a consequence of the interchange of thoughts between Mithila and Bengal. This came to be known as "Brajabhasa"[+] and was in much favour with poets like Govindadas.[6]

Mahomedan influence is detected in the literature of a later period, specially that of the 18th century. Besides direct share in literary work, the Moslem writers introduced the

5 Dineshchandra Sen, Bangabhasa O Sahitya, Ch. IV.

+ Nagendranath Gupta writes in the Modern Review, March, 1929, that "Brajaboli" was really a corrupt form of Maithil and Govindadas whose real name was Govindadas Jha was a Maithil poet. About Brajabhasa, Lassen says that it was the language of the country in which the Krishna drama had its birth. (N. K. Chattopadhya, The Yatras, 1882, p. 21.)

6 Dineshchandra Sen, Bangabhasa O Sahitya, Appendix to Ch. VI and Appendix to Ch. VII.

romantic element in Bengali, in the form of stories of love and adventure and to a certain extent they were responsible for the popular craze in the direction of trashy literature of a flamboyant type, written in imitation of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu fables and tales.[1] The Pathan kings of Bengal and their officials were patrons of Bengali literature and under their patronage very useful work was done by some Bengali poets.

Although several European nations settled in Bengal for commercial purposes during the last days of the Mahomedan rule their influence was not of sufficient cultural importance to leave any mark on the literature of Bengal. Of course, a few foreign words found a place in the vocabulary of the people. The Portuguese missionaries, however, did some literary work in Bengali for evangelical purposes but these were of such poor nature from the literary standpoint that they may be left out of consideration. It must be said in fairness to the Portuguese settlers in Bengal that to their enthusiasm and enterprise we owe the first type-printed Bengali books and the first Bengali Grammar and Dictionary.[2]

The next great influence and the greatest foreign influence came in the trend of English dominions in India. Direct intellectual relations between England and India began with English education. The English came to India as merchants but by some stroke of fortune they found themselves masters of the soil. When the occupation of the country was somewhat stable and secure and they had begun to devote themselves to the administration of the country, the necessity of finding men suitable for helping them in ruling their territories was strongly felt. Among the Indian community also there was a growing demand for the Western systems of Science, Philosophy and Art. There was a regular Anglo mania. The Government was

[1] *Ibid*, Ch. IX, Secs. 2 and 3; History of Bengali Language and Literature, pp. 800-1.

[2] Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, Part I, p. 23; Bengal: Past and Present, Vols. IX and XIII.

also anxious to westernize India. Arising out of these two motives a system of education was introduced about the benefits of which there is still a great deal of difference of opinion. The Charter Act of 1813 laid down a clause that the sum of a lakh of rupees was to be spent annually for "the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."[1] The popular demand for education was no less keen. Sir Valentine Chirol says, "The Bengalis were the first to appreciate the value of Western education. In art and literature the modern Bengali has often known how to borrow from the West without sacrificing either his own originality or the traditions of his race or the spirit of his creed."[2] How intense was the demand for Western education among the Bengali community may be understood from the following extract from a letter which Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote in 1823 to Lord Amherst :

"If it had been intended to keep the British nation ignorant of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the Schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep the country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus." This

[1] Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. IV (New edition), p. 409; R. W. Frazer British India, p. 385.

[2] India: Old and New, p. 8.

letter which was handed over to the Governor-General by Bishop Heber was the clarion-call of a new age, an age that is yet in the making inspite of a march of nearly hundred years—an age that is destined to link the East and the West, a period of expansion, of new ideas and thoughts.[1]

Macaulay's famous Notes of 1835 favouring the introduction of English education was a further step in the way of progress. Macaulay declared, "I think it clear that we are not bound by the Act of Parliament of 1813 ; that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied ; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose ; that we ought to employ them to teaching what is best worth knowing ; that English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic ; that the natives are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic ; that neither as the language of law nor as the language of religion has the Sanskrit or Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement ; that it is possible to make the natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars ; and to this end our efforts ought to be directed."

He unblushingly wrote, "A single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia," so poor was his opinion of the culture of the East. His great love for English led him to write in the same connection, "Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations." Speaking, in 1846, at the opening of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in the same strain he referred to English literature as "that literature before the light of which impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the banks of the Ganges."

[1] Max Müller, Biographical Essays, p. 4, p. 44 ; Dutt, Literature of Bengal, p. IV, p. 137 ; Frazer, Literary History of India, p. 391 ; Frazer, Indian Thought : Past and Present, p. 308.

"We must at present do our best to form a class," wrote Macaulay in the same document, "who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, as in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for knowledge to the great mass of population."[1] Lord William Bentinck made the final decision in the same year that the educational policy of the Government should be confined to the promotion of European literature and science.

Lord Macaulay's brother-in-law, Sir Charles Trevelyan's Report of 1853 to the Parliamentary Committee supported English education. H. H. Wilson in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Government of Indian Territories (5th July, 1853) said that European literature and science were to form the basis and bulk of knowledge but he was against the creation of a "separate caste of English scholars who had no longer any sympathy, or very little sympathy with their countrymen." To such an extent was the study of English emphasised that the neglect of vernaculars in schools was admitted by responsible officials. Giving evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons (25th July, 1853) Frederic Halliday said, "Wherever English is taught it swallows up everything else." In 1854 Sir Charles Wood formulated his Educational Despatch and three years later the three Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were founded. Wood expressed the hope that a new vernacular literature had to be created and such a literature would be among the most enduring monuments of British rule.[2] He held up the

[1] This despatch was printed in 1862 for private circulation by Henry Woodrow and since then has been reprinted in "Distinguished Anglo-Indians" by Col. Laurie (1888), p. 169-84.

[2] Richard Temple, India in 1880, p. 144.

refreshing hope, "It is neither our aim nor our desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country." J. C. Marshman in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons (21st July, 1853) said, "Notwithstanding the endeavour to diffuse English throughout the country the Bengali language is a more powerful medium of impression on the native mind even than English." But even at that time opinion was at variance over the question of creating a new vernacular literature in Bengal. While one school thought that Bengali literature was to be created anew,[1] another was of opinion that nothing further was needed for its improvement as the merit of the vernacular publications was already sufficiently high.[2]

What the effects of this new system of education was can be easily judged from a biography of David Hare. "Boys refused sacred threads at the 'upanayan' ceremony; many wanted to discard them; many discontinued the habit of offering morning and evening prayers; if they were forced to enter the room where the household gods were, they used to recite portions of Homer's Iliad instead of Sanskrit hymns."[3] In the flood of newness the Bengali mind lost itself. In the first onrush of Western thoughts and ideas all that was of the East was looked down with contempt. "The first generation of University scholars, products of small classes and bearing the impress of eminent teachers, were saturated with the spirit of English literature and of English freedom."[4] This newborn enthusiasm was a little inclined to overrate the value of the foreign element. But this tendency was inevitable. Regarding this phase in Bengali life, Lord Ronaldshay (now Marquesse of Zetand) remarked, "A class of Indians sprang up which adopted indiscriminately everything Western, the bad along with the good. It became the

[1] Asiatic Journal, Vol. XXIX, Pt. II, pp. 248-49.

[2] *Ibid*, Vol. XXXI (1840), pp. 250-51.

[3] Life of Ramtanu Lahiri, Shivanath Sastri.

[4] India : the New Phase, Stanley Reed and P. R. Cadell, pp. 135-36.

fashion amongst a certain section of the educated middle classes in Bengal, during the middle of the last century, to mimic the Englishman in everything and to adopt his habits both good and bad.....Young Bengal was rapidly becoming both demoralised and denationalised."[1] Another discerning observer of the Indian mind wrote, "Fifty years ago, when the Indian first awoke to the advantages of modern education, he ran to an anti-Indian extreme. He flouted his own past and shocked his own present. He thrust his Western heresies under everybody's nose. He ate meat ostentatiously, shouted the fact in the streets, and got drunk to show he was a modern. He adopted an eclectic faith more Western than Eastern."[2]

Whatever might be said about these men it cannot be denied that the influence of the West has been a source of inspiration and guidance to the Bengali intellect and these men by imibibing Western ideas made the path easier for those who came after them. But even at that time opinion was divided as to whether Western influence was prejudicial to the development of the Bengali mind or not. A gloomy picture of the educated Bengali youth of the last century was drawn in the Press.[3] On the other hand, in an influential periodical, prominence was given to the views of a former student of the Hindu College on the benefits of English education. This gentleman characterised English education as 'a beacon upon a rock' and was optimistic enough to write, "When the shelves of the day-labourer will be decorated with the works of Bacon and Bentham, the consummation devoutly wished for will be attained...the Indian Millennium will commence."[4] Whether this devoutly wished for golden age has become manifest is yet to be seen, but the influence of the West on the literary side has been beneficial. The author of the "Challenge of Asia" says, "As English

1 Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 16th February, 1923.

2 Ramsay Macdonald, Awakening of India, p. 194.

3 Asiatic Journal, II, 1840, p. 94.

4 Asiatic Journal, 1838, Part II, pp. 8-10.

became better known and especially when it became the door into Government service, students devoured the best of English literature, and though the peculiar cast of the introspective Hindu mind gave utterance to its thoughts in philosophical poetry or contemplative prose, the influence of the West is not hard to discern."[1]

The importance of English for Indian vernaculars has been great. Suffice it to say that so far back as 1833, a great friend of India, Dr. Alexander Duff, said, "The English language, I repeat, is the lever which, as the instrument of conveying the entire range of knowledge, is destined to move all Hindusthan," and the intervening period has amply shown that the great Scotch missionary was perfectly right. The intercourse with a culture which though not of higher stamp nor older than our own has certainly been a source of immense help in our way to progress. India is a land where people of diverse religions, castes and creeds live together bound by a common heritage and this feeling of kinship has been more cemented by the study of English literature, institutes and ideals. The contact with Western thought and culture gave the Bengali mind a rude shock and there was a growing desire among the educated classes for the improvement of their own vernacular. Akshaykumar Datta wrote, "The propagation and advancement of knowledge is impossible in any country without the cultivation of the national language."[2] Kishori Chand Mitra said, "The necessity and importance of cultivating the Bengali language—the language of our country, the language of our infancy, the language in which our earliest ideas and associations are entwined—will ere long be recognised by all." An opportune advice was also given by Drinkwater Bethune. Bethune said, "It is impossible that the English language can ever become familiar to the millions of inhabitants of Bengal; but if you do your duty,

1 Stanley Rice, The Challenge of Asia, p. 206.

2 Sapna Darshan.

the English language will become to Bengal what, long ago, Greek and Latin were to England; and the ideas which you gain through English learning will, by your help gradually be diffused by a vernacular literature through the masses of your countrymen." Rajnarayan Bose voiced the aspirations of the educated community when he wrote, "One hope remains incomplete, one thirst remains unquenched; that hope is to see the motherland filled with the fragrance of the fame of world-respected and vastly reputed authors; that thirst is to drink the nectarine flow of the poetical works of my own country." A well-known Bengali periodical observed in 1860, "Is it our duty to show disregard to Bengali because till now it has not reached the same level as English. Will its condition improve if we show disrespect to it ? In that disregard only our incompetence will be expressed ; to people of other countries we shall be objects of laughter." [1]

Through the knowledge of English the Bengali mind became aware of the existence of other great literatures of the world. Some of the scholars of the last century read the European classics in the original. Many new hitherto unknown avenues of knowledge were thrown open and many novel elements were introduced in the Bengali literature, apart from the reshaping and recasting of some of the older forms. There were no criticism, no short story in the modern sense, no drama, no fiction, almost no prose in Bengali and Western influence has created these. The successful handling of completely new forms is a gift from the West. Inspite of the Vaishnava and Sakta traditions Bengali literature of the early 19th century does not present a happy picture. Literature had fallen from its high pedestal and literary traditions were in the keeping of men who had little or no equipment and training for the difficult responsibilities of a literary career. Poetic rivalries which often became very indecent and scurrilous, wit-combats, lewd and coarse love songs,

[1] Soma Prakash, 12th November, 1860, p. 593.

obscene and vulgar love stories were the principal delights of the people. In such an atmosphere the advent of English literature was welcomed very warmly in Bengal and under its influence a new type of literature began to be shaped. The constant touch with a living and powerful literature has worked as a strong tonic. Writers in Bengal have assimilated much from the West. Sir Sidney Lee says, "In one or other degree the assimilation of pre-existing literature is a main element in all literary composition."[1] Walter Raleigh says, "Plagiarism is a crime only where writing is a trade.....The best quotations, the best translations, the best thefts, are all equally new and original works."[2]

There have been critics who think that Homer copied the Ramayana but they forget that the stock of ancient myths was common to all the earliest races of the earth. Weber advanced the theory that the Ramayana was copied from Homer. Max Müller examined the fallacy of this kind of one-sided thinking and concluded after an examination of similarities between Roman Catholic and Tibetan Buddhist rituals, Colebrooke's list of identical words in Sanskrit, Latin, German, and Persian stories of the Jataka and the Bible, Panchatantra and Aesop's fables, that these coincidences were merely of an accidental nature, sometimes due to common sources and sometimes to actual influences.[3] Tennyson was several times charged with plagiarism and a critic of the poet says, "Are not human eyes all over the world looking at the same objects and must there not consequently be coincidences of thoughts and impressions and expressions? The shells upon the shore of the ocean of knowledge are free to all who will gather them; it is only the pearls of the great deep which only the mighty can find, and which to them must

1 Sidney Lee, East London College Inaugural Address, 1913.
2 Raleigh, Style.
3 Max Müller, Last Essays, "Coincidences."

belong when found."[1] A similar view was taken by Anatole France while examining "L'Obstacle" of Daudet and Maurice Montegut's verse-tragedy "Le Fou" and Molière's "Tartufe" and Scarron's "Les Hypocrites." "Situations," he wrote, "are everybody's property," and "coincidences are frequent and inevitable."[2]

The pioneers in Bengal naturally looked towards English literature for building up a new literature for themselves and in fashioning a style which would be accepted to the general body of writers.[3] The spadework was facilitated by the translation of a large number of English books and various others were adapted to suit the requirements of a Bengali reading-public. This work was partly done by educated Bengalis who were known in those days as "Young Bengal."[4] The European missionaries had also considerable share in this task. New ideas generally come in the wake of translations and they popularise new models on which new and original works can be written.

[1] J. C. Walter-Tennyson, Ch. XVII, "Was Tennyson an Original Poet?"; also Appendix (B) of the same book.

[2] On Life and Letters, IV "A Plea for Plagiarism."

[3] Calcutta Review, 1885, p. 331.

[4] Calcutta Review, June : 1924, "Young Bengal and Translation Work;" see also Calcutta Review, Vol. IV, for Raja Ram Mohan Roy's opinion of Young Bengal whom he regarded as "more debased than the most bigotted Hindu, and their principles the bane of all morality." (p. 391); Young Bengal was staunchly defended by Soma Prakash (10th December, 1860) against an attack by the Hindu Patriot (28th November, 1860)." If the causes of the rapid and wonderful improvement of Bengali Literature during the last fifty years be carefully investigated, we have little doubt that the ever-increasing influence of English literature and education will be assigned a foremost place among them. It is not possible now to appreciate fully the great benefit our literature derived, in the first stage from the translation of English books. The books, etc., translated or adapted from English school, books by Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Akshay Kumar Dutt, K. M. Banerjee, Rajendralal Mitra, Rajkrishna Banerjee and others, for use in our schools, considerably helped in the formation of Modern Bengali, in fashioning the style of Bengali composition and in the dissemination of a knowledge of Western literature and science among our countrymen."—Memoirs of Kali Prossunno Singh by M. N. Ghosh (1920), pp. 84-85.

Then coming to works original in themselves we find Western influence contributing much to their making. Madhusudan Dutt said of his great poem "Meghnad Badh Kavya" that it was three-fourths Greek. For writing farce, tragic drama, and the sonnet he was indebted to the West. He modelled the "Birangana Kavya" on Ovid and Pope. Another work which he planned was to be based on Virgil. Rangalal's "Padmini" owes a debt to the West. Hemchandra Banerjee acknowledged that for his "Vritra Samhar Kavya" he was indebted to Western poetry. Nabinchandra Sen's works bear traces of the influence of Milton, Scott and Byron. The great Bankim was not ashamed to say that for some of his works he owed the inspiration to Western literature and even Rabindranath is no exception to this influence. Besides direct literary influences, several other facts are to be considered in this connection which had an overwhelming effect upon the development of Bengali literature. The Bramho Samaj movement, the movement against polygamy and in favour of widow marriage, the renaissance of Hindu religion, the rapid expansion of the Press, the gradual emancipation of women, the spread of higher education, the demand for political freedom which are primarily the effects of Western culture have tended to the steady growth of a voluminous literature. This was also the object of those who were in charge of Public Instruction in India in the last century. "We conceive the formation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed," wrote Mr. Adam in a Report on Vernacular Education in 1835 to the Committee of Public Instruction, Bengal. The net result can best be described in the words of the first President of the Indian Legislative Assembly.

"Fortunately the time is long past when the Committee of Public Instruction could say that 'the vernacular languages contained neither the literary nor the scientific information necessary for a liberal education,' or when an educated Bengali himself could meet an English believer in the possibilities of

the Bengali language with the retort that 'anything said or written in the vernacular tongue would be despised in consequence of the medium through which it was conveyed.' Through the combined agency of Indian scholars, British missionaries and British administrators, the Bengali language has in 80 years since these words were written been transformed from 'a fantastic thing, unintelligible, foolish, and full of unmeaning vain pedantry,' into a vehicle of thought with 'a new status and a classic dignity'." [1]

JAYANTAKUMAR DAS GUPTA

[1] Sir Frederic Whyte, India, A Federation? pp. 14-15, Significance of the Revival of Bengali.